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THE

WRONGS OF WOMAN.

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

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THE WRONGS OF WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

When we name the infliction of a wrong, we imply the existence of a right. Therefore, if we undertake to discuss the wrongs of women, we may be expected to set out by plainly defining what are the rights of women. This is soon done. We repudiate all pretensions to equality with man, save on the ground specified by the Apostle, that "in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female." We claim, in common with man, and in like measure, the undying principle of a spiritual existence: we possess an equal share of inbred corruption, an equal incapacity to deliver ourselves from its bondage, an equal need of the redemption wrought out by our Almighty Deliverer by the sacrifice of himself on the cross for sinners. We want, and therefore we ask, and asking we shall possess, and possessing we shall use, even as man does, the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, to show us the right way, and to uphold us in it when we have once entered thereupon. In the joys of heaven, or in the torments of hell, our portion will be as man's: in

all these things we are equal. One painful pre-eminence we cannot deny to be ours, for "the woman was first in the transgression," and to this hour the doom pronounced upon her at the fall is found in operation all over the world. A high and happy pre-eminence in privilege we may also humbly rejoice in; for it was "the seed of the woman" who bruised the serpent's head, and He who had no earthly father was in his human nature the son of a mother. Thus the sex who were lost by giving heed to the deceivableness of Satan, are "saved in child-bearing," so far as they exercise faith, individually, in the Saviour, who by a woman was born into the world; and man may not reproach woman with her instrumentality in occasioning the loss of Paradise, seeing that she was made the medium of bringing Him into the world who should redeem the forfeited possession.

Complaints are occasionally heard from aspiring individuals of the female sex, as to a supposed depression in the scale of intellectual power and mental capability below the mark at which they consider themselves entitled to be rated: some conceiving that the spiritual equalization is no less applicable here. As a matter of opinion alone, it might be left for every one to settle, in that unbounded liberty of thought which even the fettered galley-slave is free to roam abroad in: and where, as in England, speech is almost equally free with thought, the disciples of such doctrine may and will propound it. Setting forth, however, with so doubtful a title, it is due to our readers and to ourselves to announce that we have no intention of ad-

vancing any such claims; and further to guarantee that assurance, we frankly confess our entire dissent from the views of those who hold them. What woman originally was, before she transgressed, we cannot say, because we do not know; nor do any means exist of ascertaining that point. We suppose that the serpent, in his great subtlety, made choice of Eve to practise his fatal delusions upon, because he saw in her the indications of comparative weakness: and the important fact distinctly stated by the inspired apostle, that Adam was not deceived, shows that not even with the aid of the woman could Satan impose upon his mind. By her influence a fearful conquest was obtained over him; for he ate with a distinct recognition of the consequences. Eve shamefully dishonoured the Most High, by her act of disobedience; Adam impiously defied Him. She regarded the Lord as a man, that he should lie; as one who had spoken, but would not do it. She showed herself pre-eminently a fool in crediting the extravagant falsehood, that He who had created her husband out of the dust of the earth and herself out of a bone of that dust-born body, was afraid of their attaining to a rivalry with HIM by eating the fruit of a certain tree. The pride of carnal reason too often conquers faith; but here was an instance of presumptuous folly overpowering both. Eve was a *help* meet for Adam, in his sweet task of dressing and keeping the garden, in the exercise of continual prayer and praise, and in all the happy employments of his blissful lot; but with this sad proof of her extreme instability before us, we had better refrain from speculating

on the subject of her supposed equality with man, in the higher powers of their common nature.

Indeed, all that we know of the paradisaical state is comprised in so brief an outline as to render it a marvel how people can venture on the bold conjectures that are gravely put forth, or the still bolder assertions that are rashly hazarded. We greatly lack that wisdom which does not desire to go beyond what is written. Our business, alas! is, and must be, with humanity in its fallen state, of which alone we can safely predicate anything on the grounds either of history, observation, or experience—the only available guides where revelation is silent. For woman as she is, we claim nothing, but in the capacity assigned to her in Scripture, "the weaker vessel;" in which term we include the whole creature, mind, body, and estate. To confine it to the body alone would clash with the obvious meaning of the same phrase, where the Lord designates Saul of Tarsus as a chosen vessel, to bear His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. Here Saul was certainly not spoken of in reference to his bodily powers alone, but to the whole man with all his mental faculties, all his natural and acquired gifts: his zeal, eloquence, intrepidity—everything that had rendered the persecutor so terrible, and which now, consecrated to the Lord's service, was to render the apostle pre-eminently useful. Let us, then, contentedly bear our impressive designation as "the weaker vessel," and on it found the rights, that we may the more effectually show forth the wrongs, of woman.

We must admit that, whether right or wrong, the

difference everywhere observable in the mode of rearing boys and girls, from the cradle, operates to the increased feebleness and dependency of the latter as compared with the former; and except in the very lowest grade of the most despised among us, where, in an undistinguishable mass of wretchedness, barbarism, and neglect, all are herded together, this rule will be found to obtain. Even in the very humblest of decent cottages, and on the forms of the infant school, we shall see the little girl's unshorn locks twisted up in papers, and her slight person adorned with some superfluous article of dress as an attempt at decoration, while her brother's cropped head, and freedom from all but indispensable clothing, leave him far more exposed to the bracing, hardening effect of the elements. Her employments too are marked by a similar diversity. She must, with bent joints, and in a constrained position, ply the knitting or the sewing needle, during hours when his muscles are at least free to exercise themselves, although, perhaps, under the comparative restraint of a school-room: but when once set at liberty, he flies to the robust sports from which she is excluded: the wrestling, and hurling, and batting, swimming and rowing, that, under the full influence of an ever-changing climate, harden his sinews, expand his frame, and nerve him to future battle against the many ills that flesh is heir to; while she, limited to a moderate participation in some of the less violent exercises, daily enforces her title to be considered more and more "the weaker vessel."

It will be perceived that we are speaking of the

humbler ranks in society. To them, indeed, we shall principally refer throughout; for there is comparatively little wrong to complain of on the part of their more refined neighbours. We might, and perhaps some day we may, point out certain grievances under which they also labour; but they are of a kind wholly dissimilar from those which we purpose here to display, except so far as regards the still greater restraint, the far more systematical cramping, and debilitating, and enervating mode of artificial training, to which girls are condemned in families of the higher class. But the demand on their physical powers is pretty fairly proportioned to the deterioration thus produced; and such sufferings as they undergo are in a great measure self-inflicted. The young lady, who by parental or educational authority has been condemned to the pains of tight lacing and pinching shoes, rarely avails herself of the discretionary power, in due time devolving on her, to loosen the grasp either of the one or the other. She rejoices in her slender waist, and shapely little foot, and pays the prescribed penalties for such interference with the laws of nature; counting, perhaps, even the delicacy of impaired health as an additional item in her list of attractions. We, therefore, leave that branch of the subject untouched, even as we do the fancied wrong of debarring our damsels from publicly joining in the intellectual pursuits of their academic friends; and figuring in halls of science, or in the senatorial chamber. We *have* known such privations made the topic of very pathetic or very indignant remonstrance; to which we have always respond-

ed an affectionate wish that the fair complainants might never know a heavier grievance, nor suffer a more unreasonable curtailment of their lawful privileges.

But the lower, the far more numerous classes, could lay open before us a scene of endurance that our hearts might well quail to look upon. It is, in truth, a page so black with wrongs not to be palliated, that the conviction of its lying perpetually unveiled beneath the eye of God is very awful. We shall attempt, however inadequately, a sketch of this wide blot, for such it is; and if a woman pleading for her sex — an Englishwoman for the daughters of her land — a Christian woman for those who have had the like precious price paid for their redemption, may be heard, and win a sympathizing response to the appeal that she ventures to make, it will indeed be one of the happiest, most blessed, of the occupations in which so feeble a hand could be engaged.

CHAPTER II.

THE VILLAGE HOMES.

The privilege is great, but not less so the difficulty of tracing what we desire to bring before the educated females of England—the actual wrongs sustained by those of our sex whose lot has been, providentially, so cast as to render their life necessarily one of labour: and so to fix their attention upon this interesting, helpless class, as to rouse the best feelings of womanly nature in their behalf. Beyond this, we would, through such becoming medium, attract the notice of the other sex to any cases that cannot be ameliorated without their concurrence, their companionship in the work of mercy. Indeed, this will be found indispensable to a greater extent than may at first appear. Painful, terrible, revolting, as are some of these wrongs, in their nature and consequences, we will, as much as possible, spare the feelings of our readers, and leave them to draw inferences where description would be scarcely tolerable.

Wishing to avoid the admixture of fictitious narrative, yet to realize, as far as possible, the various situations in which female labourers are placed, we

will suppose the inhabitants of a small hamlet in one of our midland counties, and not far from a town of considerable traffic, placing out their girls to such employments as their respective circumstances may render advisable or practicable. Hitherto, they have dwelt in the usual manner, according to their domestic circumstances. Ann and Frances King are the daughters of a small farmer, who has suffered losses from the improving system of the principal landed proprietor of that district. This gentleman is much opposed to the subdivision of land, and has instructed his agent to unite, as quickly as the expiration of leases and other occurrences will allow of it, the separated portions of his estate, taking down old cottages, buying up small interests, ejecting bad tenants, and ever keeping in view the principle of aggregation, while carefully avoiding everything like aggression. Farmer King holds a lease, renewable forever, of a substantial though small brick house and some ten acres of good land. The lot adjoining his was in possession of a most industrious, able neighbour, who lately sold it for its fair value to the squire, being convinced that, with such a sum in hand, he should do far better in America, fine stories of which had reached him from various quarters. King had at one time a little inclined the same way, but attachment to the land, the home of his fathers, was too strong to be overcome. He declined all proffers, and much annoyed the agent by his pertinacious retention of a little property so dovetailed into that of the emigrant as to render their separation very awkward, and the

purchase of the whole not a little desirable. He feels that his prospects are by no means improved, so far as the landlord's good-will can affect them, but his elder children are healthy and industrious, his wife frugal and careful, and if Ann, who is near seventeen, and Frances, not two years younger, are as well provided for as they have reason to expect, through the good offices of a friend's friend in London, who hopes to find situations for them both, farmer King, with true English independence, will pursue his present course; and though his respectful obeisance when meeting the squire be not so cordially recognised as of old, he can solace himself by humming, inaudibly perhaps, but with an honest feeling of deep-rooted satisfaction,

> "I can trace back the time, a far distant date,
> Since my ancestors toiled in this field;
> And the farm I now hold on your honour's estate,
> Is the same that my grandfather tilled."

A letter has arrived: all is settled. Frances is to be apprenticed in one of the most respectable dress-making houses in town; and Ann, being older, with a turn for fancy work, will be received into the establishment of a French milliner, also at the West End.

A grade lower in station, and with much poorer prospects. Tom Clarke knows not what he shall do to provide employment for his four motherless girls. He is helper in the stableyard of the village inn; but the opening of a line of railway that passes on to the same point whither this high-road leads, more circuitously, has so diminished the custom, that the innkeeper talks

of dropping the concern altogether at the expiration of another year; and any hope of seeing his active little Kate installed as bar-maid is at an end. His own situation there has become very unprofitable, and the rude, rough way in which his girls have been accustomed to hoyden about the place has not fitted them for any path of steady industry, or raised them up friends. He must look out a service somewhere for Kate, and wait for something to turn up for himself, to enable him to keep the others till they grow older.

John Smith is still worse off: he was head labourer to the emigrant farmer, and looked after his field and cows. He cannot now get work, and is greatly reduced; but the union workhouse is to his apprehension more formidable than even a prison would be. The parish authorities have advised him to remove, as many of his fellow-husbandmen had done, to the manufacturing districts, where his wife may find employ, as well as himself, and the little ones turn their hands to some of the many occupations provided for children in that busy mart of labour. He has fixed on Birmingham, and would have persuaded Clarke to accompany him, but he is resolved to stick to the old inn as long as a remaining customer assists to keep the doors open.

But another class of children are about to enter upon active life. These are the paupers, the friendless, pennyless recipients of parish bounty. Happily for the board of guardians, a sudden demand has set all the mills going, and they are about to forward a supply to more than one town. Of these we will

speak more particularly by-and-by: at present we have only to revert to the names already fixed on as enabling us to keep in view the circumstances under which families *must* farm out, as best they can, the commodity which we would fain see reserved for home consumption — female labour: the industrious toil of women and girls, whose habits do, indeed, fit them for active exertion, and who ought not to crave, in any station, an exemption from what forms the principal feature in the lot of man, when placed in the same rank of life: though we must plead that wherever civilization, to say nothing of Christianity, prevails, the burden be regulated to suit the physical capacity of the creature who bears it; and every infraction of this rule of common humanity is an outrage, of which God will surely take cognizance.

We have now to behold, in thought, the departure of the two girls from the farmhouse. London is a magic word to the simple villager who knows it only by report, and who associates with it all of wealth, grandeur, and enjoyment, that the youthful imagination can dream about. True, home has charms that will make themselves felt, and that with the greatest power when home is about to be quitted for a long period — perhaps of years: and we may well believe of two young girls who had nestled beneath its roof from their birth, that, however brilliant, the prospect must seem strange which held not forth the smiles of endearment never yet withdrawn from them. A morning scene, uncheered by the tones of a busy mother's voice, as she issued the needful orders to a ready band of obe-

dient listeners; an evening's length, on which the father's loving look would never shine, nor brothers and sisters listen to the recital of a day's wonders; the blessing and the kiss, the careful thought for all their comforts, and the needful admonition, felt to be requisite even while unwelcome; these things would be missed indeed, amid all the joys of London. Nay, the favourite tree, the patch of garden, proudly appropriated in early childhood, and still retained as exclusive property; the faithful old dog, the petted cat and her kittens, and the cows that come lowing past the door with clockwork regularity, until the sight and the sound were regarded as a natural occurrence, inseparable from the other daily phenomena of existence;—to lose all these at a stroke, and themselves only to meet when the intervals of business might happen to occur at the same time, and a place be found to which both could repair; this was sufficient to add bitterness to the tears of parting; and we may be assured that whatever drawbacks may be found on the general advantages and blessings of home, they dwindle into nothing when the forsaken shelter is looked back upon from a removed spot. The thorns are too minute to be visible; they are lost in the thickening foliage of the peaceful bower, and the bright glow of its roses tells of the beauty, the fragrance, the joyousness, of what is, alas! utterly beyond our reach.

Yet, to a young girl's excited imagination, the future will assume an interest before which the past rapidly fades away, while the present is regarded merely as a stepping-stone to that inviting future. Such a one, in

her eighteenth year, we have to behold proceeding to the very focus of all fashion, the treasure-house of what, with good management, would become substantial wealth in her hands, and by means of which she would be able not only to pay back a part of the expenditure liberally bestowed on her hitherto, and particularly in the matter of her outfit, by indulgent parents, but also to afford similar advantages to some of the little ones of the household, who might look forward to her being the head of an establishment before they were ready to commence their career. Besides, there might be other plans, concealed in her own bosom, and only to be carried into effect by securing an independence. We may fancy, without overstepping the bounds of every-day probability, all this, and much more, connected with the launching forth of such an individual upon the troubled ocean of busy life: and who among us would not bid the weeping traveller God speed, as the last turning of the road shuts out from her sight the scene of so many joyous hours; and nothing remains to her of home but the sister adventurer by her side, and the anxious but silent father, who is driving them to the nearest railway station, where he soon after sees them comfortably placed in a second-rate carriage, their boxes carefully stowed, and, holding a hand of each in his own, continues leaning on the side of the vehicle, reiterating the injunction to be careful of themselves, obedient to their employers, obliging to their companions, and — but the bell rings, — with one strong, almost convulsive grasp, he drops their hands, steps back a pace, and, folding his arms, looks

after the receding train, soon lost in the distance — gone, like a vision of the night.

Well, he has done his best: the pressure of the times falls heavier on him than he has allowed his family to suspect; but here are two, as he hopes, provided for, and in a fair way of becoming helpers in their turn. He has paid thirty pounds with Ann to be boarded and lodged, for three years, as an improver, and perfected in the business of which she had learned the rudiments through the kindness of the squire's lady's own woman, who took a fancy to her, and sometimes privately availed herself of her help in that line. Frances is to be regularly apprenticed, taught the whole mystery of dress-making, and kept for five years. Her premium was something larger, but great advantages are to result from her situation in such a very fashionable house, and the money, he feels sure, is well laid out.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG MILLINER'S DEBUT.

We must now accompany Ann to the establishment of Madame A. The season is beginning: it promises to be a brilliant one, and the principals are in high good humour at the hourly influx of orders. Ann sees much promise of kindness in the smiles of Madame, and the busy looks, the swift though quiet movements of the superintendents accord with her notions and habits of active industry. She feels, indeed, a great dissimilarity in herself from those before her, and blushes a deeper bloom at her supposed inferiority. She imagines that universal air of languor, that absence of healthful glow, that reed-like attenuation of figure, to be the result of London polish; for she has observed something of the same appearance in the high-bred quality ladies occasionally visiting at the manor-house; and of whom she had a glimpse at the village church, or as they rolled by in their carriages. She notices the long, faint, unwinding tresses that depend from the foreheads of those young milliners, and wonders if her own crisp, elastic curls will ever learn to hang so droopingly. But short time is allowed for observation: a seat is pointed out,

a mantelet of black velvet placed in her hands, and she is directed to work with all speed towards its completion. She obeys with alacrity, and gives satisfaction; but her country appetite is also on the alert, and she longs for the dinner-hour, though somewhat afraid that her rustic manners will appear to great disadvantage among these London ladies.

The time arrives: a long table is set out, on which are displayed cold mutton, suet puddings, and a small quantity of potatoes. The celerity with which some few among the workwomen attack this homely fare, contrasted with the sickened, loathing looks of others, as they turn over the morsel on their plates, surprises her; but while watching one of the latter, whose changeful colour had attracted her notice, as threatening a fainting fit, she receives a friendly hint from her next neighbour to lose no time, for that fifteen minutes is the limit of their dinner. Ann thanks her, and makes the most of her short opportunity.

Immediately on the expiration of the time, all repair again to the work-room, and resume their places. Ann begins to long for a breath of fresh air, but prudently resolves to express no wish, waiting to ascertain what are the ways of the house, to which she is aware she must assimilate herself. The hum of many voices is so new to her, that for a time she cannot catch anything distinctly save the directions, given in a shrill, and by no means a good-tempered tone, by the "first-hands," or overlookers, with plenty of fault-finding, for alleged laziness or mistakes. By degrees, she begins to make out the topic on which her more immediate

neighbours are engaged, and finds it by no means of an improving character. She does not like to listen, remembering how particular her mother was in checking such discourse; and with the image of that watchful mother, thoughts of home crowd upon her mind, until she is loudly and harshly told to take care that tear does not fall upon her work, and make a blemish. This draws all eyes upon her, and she hastily brushes away the gathered drop.

The hour for tea arrives: this refreshment has been eagerly looked forward to, for the accumulated breath of about thirty persons in a room, not indeed small for that number, but badly ventilated, together with the broad rays of sunshine streaming through the windows, and making visible a cloud of subtle dust, had induced a sickened feeling that demanded it. However, before the beverage was ready, a complete change had come over the scene: daylight had scarcely faded; the sweet mellow twilight that everybody loves, but none so well as the dweller in a rural spot, was about to soften down some of the glaring tints that lay heaped upon the tables, and Ann would welcome it, as bringing to her mind the pleasant pictures connected with that season of rest from the farmer's toil; but, behold! in a moment the blaze of gas-lights is shed upon every corner of the room, and with the increased heat comes the indescribable oppression, the giddiness, and nausea, produced by the fumes of gas in a confined, low-roofed space, on such as have been wholly unaccustomed to it. This has not endured long before tea is announced: but ten minutes are barely allowed for

the meal, if such the sickly slop, and slices of coarse bread with a scraping of rancid butter, could be called. Ann thinks of the produce of her father's cows, the delicate cream, and newly-churned butter, and the light bread that her own hands had kneaded, her mother's baked. She gulps down the contents of her cup, but the food she cannot touch, after one mouthful, and returns to the work-room, where she hears delivered in a mournful tone the prediction that they will not have completed the day's labour before two o'clock in the morning. She had before ascertained that they commenced it at six, by gas-light, of course. This is heavy news: she would count it no hardship to rise at six nor at five; but to lose her natural rest, never deferred later than ten at night, and to seek it at last without having tasted the fresh air since she entered that house in the morning; — these are evils for which she was not prepared. She asks a companion when the young people are allowed to walk out, and is answered, "On Sundays, such as are not too tired to stir."

Midnight arrives. The scene is so strange to the new comer that she regards it as a dream. Seeing her nod over her work, one of the overlookers has advised her to follow the example of several who, to keep themselves awake, are standing. She is glad so far to unbend her joints, stiff with the unwonted confinement; and in this position she steals some hurried looks at her fellow-labourers, whom she already feels she must designate as fellow-sufferers; and marks the effects produced on them by the overpowering toil.

In one place, a first-hand, more privileged than the inferior class, has laid herself down on a heap of gaudy cuttings, and might pass for a corpse, only that the quick heavy breathing proves it is sleep, not death. The long period of ten minutes has been lost in such inaction, and now another overlooker rouses her to resume her task. The fretfulness occasioned by this awakening vents itself in a violent scolding bestowed on a very pale young girl, whose deformed appearance had attracted Ann's pitying observation, and whose irritation under the unjust rebuke is shown by the snapping of the thread as she peevishly twitches it out. This calls forth a further reprimand, but Ann loses sight of the parties by the interposing figures of two or three who run to catch a falling companion, fainting where she stands. This was the second fit that had occurred during the day, and Ann begins to fear that it is the frequent consequence of their employment. Through mere nervous apprehension, she becomes giddy, and resumes her seat; then, conscious of exhaustion from want of food, inquires at what hour they will be called to supper, and is answered, "When work is done." She rises again, rallies her powers, and comparing her own robust state to the sickly debility of her associates, is conscious that she ought to bear up much better than they can be expected to do. Besides, it is only a press of business; and they must not lose good customers by neglecting orders. She will do her best, not only to equal, but exceed, the efforts of those around her. She does not yet know that this is the third day and night of incessant application during twenty, and

unbroken confinement throughout the twenty-four hours; nor is she aware that the fact often noticed in her hearing of the next week but one being that of the drawing-room, will grievously increase the burden already hard to bear.

But soon a movement of satisfaction is perceptible; a book is brought into the room, and one of the elder assistants, with a strong voice, prepares to read it aloud. Ann loves books: besides a daily portion in the Bible, she has had many good and profitable and usefully entertaining books given or lent for their family reading. She hopes now to hear something to rouse her better principles into action, and to remind her in whatsoever state she is, therewith to be content. But far from such a strain is the work she now listens to: a tale, the very meaning of which she can hardly make out, but where murder, and violence, and situations of fearful peril, and bursts of unbridled passion, at the expense of filial and conjugal duty, make up the exciting compound. She becomes interested, by degrees, in the impending fate of heroes and heroines upon whom, in her simplicity, she looks as real characters; and there is a transitory impulse given to the drowsy faculties, while the life-blood waxes thin, and feeble, and scanty, in the veins of those poor girls, and a moral poison sinks deep into their minds. Some of the workwomen being French, a play in their own language is read to them, the party being divided for the purpose; and though several seem totally heedless, wrapped in comfortless gloom, evidently smitten with a blight that nothing can counteract, and incapable of even this low

scale of intellectual enjoyment, the literary charm takes its usual effect on the greater number.

Two o'clock, and the word is given to clear, which occupies, with all the efforts they can make, upwards of three-quarters of an hour, with ten minutes for a hard, heavy supper of cheese. And then retires, and finds that only two besides herself occupy the bed allotted to her. Overcome with extreme fatigue, she would fain sleep; but the same cause has operated so long as to produce an opposite effect upon her companions, and, already nervous, she is disturbed and annoyed beyond measure. One is so utterly exhausted that she must throw herself down in her clothes to rest before she can make the effort of undressing; the other carries on, with a friend in the next bed, a discussion as to the comparative elegance of two gentlemen who had noticed them in the Park the preceding Sunday. Ann could not at once close her ears; and when slumber at last steals over her, and the hearty sleep that would have continued unbroken for five or six hours begins its refreshing reign, it is within an hour of the time to commence dressing for the next day's toil.

The morning — a London morning by gas-light, in a close apartment — brings back the scene of yesternight, as though a short doze had overpowered the labourer at her toil. One of the concomitants, perceptible enough before, was now rendered most oppressively offensive, and this was the impure breath of the young women. Where scarcely at any time a single individual can be found exempt from serious derangement of the digestive organs, while very many are suffering

from asthma, and confirmed, advanced consumption, attended with bad coughs, the air respired by them must become fetid to a degree at once loathsome and injurious to the yet healthy victim of such influences. Added to this, the personal cleanliness of such dispirited creatures is often of a very superficial kind; and the combined effluvia is hardly endurable, until the more delicate sense becomes blunted by continued exposure to it. What does Ann now dream of, as she bends, flushed and fretful, over her black velvet mantle? The crowing of the cock, the lowing of the herd, the merry carol of the lark; the good humoured bark of the dog, as he gambols round his master, whose voice is heard in tones no less cheerful, bidding him be quiet. These, with the mother's summons to her girls, and the laughing prattle of children, while splashing each other in the abundance of their early ablutions, form the chorus that Ann longs to hear. She feels herself alone, a stranger, a prisoner, a slave. There is no sprightliness among her companions, though their ages range through the most buoyant periods of youth. Their spirits are broken, and hers already feels that it must shortly break. Their tempers are soured, and she is conscious that the worm of discontent is fastening upon hers. There is no morning portion, no psalm, no prayer. The holy book has never been alluded to; nor has she seen a knee bent in private devotion. She hears from the street a commencing bustle, but, oh, how unlike the happy activity of the farmyard!

Yet, again, as daylight advances, and the gas is extinguished, and a breakfast-table spread before her, she

regains somewhat of her natural cheerfulness, upbraids herself for being so soon discouraged, talks, and smiles, and resolves to bear up better than those around her do. This is Friday: the work must cease with the week, and a Sunday's rest and refreshment — the church, the open air, with perhaps a sight of Frances, will compensate for the three days' hard toil that she will then have endured. Of the six days' harder toil that must follow it, Ann will not, as yet, allow herself to think.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG MILLINER'S SECOND YEAR.

We must walk into the parlour of a very excellent and benevolent medical practitioner, who devotes a part of every morning to the gratuitous examination of respectable patients, such as shrinking from the publicity of a dispensary, can yet ill afford a fee for private advice. He has dismissed two or three visitants, and rings for the next to enter. A glance of commiseration, a chair pointed out, are followed by a request that she will rest for a minute while he arranges some papers — in reality, he sees that such repose is necessary for the recovery of her breath ere he can hope to obtain, without distressing her by a painful effort, any answer to his queries.

Poor girl! she breathes as though her slow progress along a level street had been a wild race to the summit of a mountain; yet no accession of colour has it brought to her wan and sunken cheek. Poor Ann! the slim, bowed figure, and the tress of thin, loose, flossy hair, bear little vestige of the plump contour and bright rich curls that marked the young girl who, twelve months since, first made her appearance in the work-room of Madame A.

"I think I have seen you before," is the good doctor's opening remark.

"You have, sir: six months ago, when the pain first got very bad in my side and my back, I came to you, and you gave me some medicine; but as I could not obey your orders about fresh air, and exercise, and food, and regular hours, I felt it useless to trouble you."

"I am sorry, very sorry. Medicine, without due attention to diet and other things, can do little, — indeed, nothing, but distress the patient, and disappoint the physician. I fear you have not changed your employment."

"No, sir, I could not. The agreement was for three years, and the premium paid; and my employer, not thinking me ill enough then to need the country air, and as it was the season, would not let me go till I became much worse. Then I went home for a month, and got a deal better there, and came back again almost well; but, sir, I have fallen off sorely, and I may say suddenly. My breathing is so bad, I can hardly speak. My chest, my side —"

"I see it all: you must go home. You ought to have gone weeks ago."

"Times are bad at home, sir; father displeased the landlord, and does not thrive well. Besides, there's a large family of children, and why should I be a burden upon my parents?"

The doctor's look seems to imply that she will not burden anybody long. Ann has caught its expression, and a hectic flush rises to her cheek.

"If it is your opinion, sir, that I must soon die, cer-

tainly I will not grieve my mother's heart by dying among strangers."

"I have not said so much as that. I consider your removal necessary — indispensable, to even the slightest amendment of health. But let me hear exactly how your time is passed, now that your weak state demands, from common humanity, some indulgence."

"You may remember, sir, I told you I was a strong, healthy girl when I came to town, as good as fourteen months ago; but coming at the season, I was forced to work immediately as hard as the oldest hands. It wore me out. I soon began to lose my appetite: I was too tired to sleep at nights; I had pain in the back, and shoulders, and limbs. For some time I went to church on Sundays, and that did me good, body and mind; but after a while, I was forced to lie in bed all the Sunday morning, and when it was fine in the afternoon I had a bit of a stroll in the nearest park."

"And left off going to church?"

"None of them would go with me, sir; and I had fainting fits so often I didn't like to be by myself; but it's no use making excuses: I left off going to church, because my spirits were bad, and I was over-persuaded by those about me that nothing was so good for me as merriment and amusement, which was out of our reach all the rest of the week. I regret it now, bitterly: I was better taught at home; but, oh! sir, the power of example is very great over the young, especially when nobody that they can look up to cares for them except as working-machines."

"I believe it, my poor girl. Were no questions asked as to how you passed the Lord's day?"

"None, sir: if we dined out, we had much kinder looks than when we dined at home, and nothing was ever said or asked. Sometimes we had to work all the Sunday, but not often, though we very often worked till almost day; and one or another of us had usually some finishing to do, and things to send home to ladies in the morning."

"Shame on such ladies!"

"Ah, sir, there was a beautiful young lady married to a great lord, and the wedding-dresses were so fine! We had all the millinery, and a house near us the dress-making; and to my knowledge both houses were at work almost all Sunday to get the things done; and one girl, very weakly, came by her death through that."

"Was the match so suddenly made?"

"It was in all the papers, sir, weeks and weeks before; and the time was fixed; but as some change might happen in the last fashions, the orders were put off to the latest; and then they were offered to those that would undertake them in least time. A house employed by the family scrupled to break through Sunday, and wanted to begin a day sooner; but it would not suit, and Madame A. was delighted to undertake it. Such things as this are what give us the last blow when we are greatly weakened; and my relapse, after coming back from my home, was owing to what I heard Madame call the most profitable fortnight of her life."

"What do you chiefly complain of now?"

"The pain, sir, in my chest is constant. I must stoop, because it seems to relieve the great pain in the shoulder blades; but the stooping certainly makes my breath shorter. Palpitation of the heart comes on if I only change my attitude, or speak; and a mist is over my eyes, and a choking in my throat, and very great sickness. Often I feel so hungry as to reckon of dinner time, but the sight of my food turns it all to disgust; not that I have any complaint to make of what is set before us, but my fancy will run upon things that I cannot get. Sometimes I reconcile myself, and persuade myself to eat, but the short time allowed us is gone, and we must make the best of our way back to work. Then there is such a headache! grievous racking pains in the limbs, and you may see my right shoulder blade is growing out. At night, or rather in the morning, when I lie down to sleep, my eyes will be staring wide open, notwithstanding that they are so tired it seems a wonder to me how I can help shutting them. But it is the same with many others. Indeed, except the very new hands, hardly one of us but could say as much as I, in some particular or another, though just now I suffer most."

"Does your principal, Madame A., remain up with the workwomen?"

"Oh no, sir. She comes in and out, and see how we go on, at different parts of the day; but we never see her very late at night, except when she has been to a party, and looks in on us before going to bed."

"Do you receive no extra pay for your extra work?"

"No work is considered extra, sir. I think myself that when we have to labour all, or greater part, of Sunday, we ought to be paid for that. However, money would not buy back the health and strength it consumes, to take from us the one day of rest that God has given to us."

"Does your employer never call in additional help when there is such a press of work?"

"No, sir; and that is what we think hardest of all. There are a great many young women out of employ, who would be very glad to do occasional work; and though we in the millinery line have less plain work than the dress-makers to do, there is much in our business that might be trusted to other hands, especially if they came to work in the house. Our principal would lose the money paid to them, and gain nothing, so long as, by making us work twenty hours out of the twenty-four for weeks together, and not seldom the Sunday included, she can get the same done without any extra cost. It is we who should gain, nobody else; and we are poor, humble girls, that nobody cares for, except in our own homes. There, too, there is often poverty so great with the large families our parents have to maintain, that we have not the heart to throw ourselves on them while we *can* keep up, besides forfeiting the value of what they scraped together to pay a premium for us. But I am losing your time, sir, with my talk. I will not intrude farther."

"Sit down again, my good girl; you are not losing my time. It is the bounden duty of every man who sees this fearful waste of health and life going on — increasing, as it does — to sift the matter. A remedy

surely must be discoverable for this public evil. Proceed with what you were saying."

"I was only going to say, sir, that not a few of us are orphans, who have spent every farthing we could call our own in getting into our present situation, to enable us to support ourselves through life. Some have gone in debt for the means; and I could name half a dozen of my companions who have poor widowed mothers, or families of orphan sisters and brothers, with nothing to look forward to but the help they will give them when they can set up for themselves. Our number is thirty, or thereabouts; and I can undertake to say that twenty of them have nothing but the charity of their friends or the public to depend on if they leave their present situation."

"I can hardly think how the ten who are better circumstanced bring themselves to submit to it."

"They have made such advance in the business, sir, that they expect to have establishments of their own before long, when they may live easier lives. Or else they are wonderfully well able to bear up against it by the help they get, in wine and other nourishing things, from their friends, or out of their own pockets. Besides, the work does not lie so heavy upon the few who have got on to be first-hands and overlookers, as on the apprentices, improvers, and a few more. However, among the young women I mentioned as not being so dependent on the business, there is one quite deformed, and another went into a consumption, before they had their prospects bettered. I suppose, sir, I am in a consumption too."

"I will not take on me to pronounce so much; but, I repeat it, you must leave your present situation without delay. I will give you a prescription to take home with you to —— where do your parents live?"

Ann tells him, but adds, "I will try it, sir, a little while where I am. Others are as badly off as me, but still keeping up for the sake of their families, and why should I be the first to give in?"

The doctor is silent, and silence, as Ann knows, implies consent. He has written a prescription, and with it such directions as, in her present situation, may possibly be carried into effect. These she is to show to Madame A. A few words of earnest exhortation to make the word of God her study, and to regard the day of rest as a source of spiritual privileges, accompany his kind farewell; and the poor girl returns, with a lighter heart, to the scene of her labours.

But Madame A. is on the watch for her, with looks portending a storm. Her absence has been most unreasonably long, in the principal's estimation, who hints that the doctor's name is often made a pretext for other and less creditable appointments. Deeply hurt, Ann eagerly holds out the paper, on which Madame just bestows a glance, with words of contempt, half disguised in her native tongue, ejaculated; and then informs Ann that if she is so sickly as to require doctors and nurses, she had better throw up her engagement, and go to live at home. Ann rightly guesses that some new offer has been received, to accept which it is necessary to get rid of her. For a moment she hesitates,

but the temptation is overcome, and she declares herself willing to proceed with her accustomed tasks.

A few days elapse; the struggle is persevered in, nor do the frequent returns of fainting fits, the rapidly increasing cough, the fever-flushed cheek, asthmatic gaspings, and other concomitants of the disease, move either party: Ann does not swerve from her resolution to persevere, nor Madame A. from hers to recognize no call for particular indulgence. A court day approaches, and the utmost powers of every one in the establishment will to their utmost extent be taxed. A rival house has been opened provokingly near; and the position so long occupied by the original claimant must be made good against all competitors, not by increasing the number of hands, but by adding to the burden already imposed on those employed; and if any opening should appear for getting rid of an exhausted sufferer, and, without even present diminution of gains, supplying the vacancy with a newer and more efficient workwoman — we had almost said machine — now is the time to profit by it. That sounding single knock at the door, unaccompanied by the ringing of the bell, betokens a rustic hand. The man who bows himself in, just as Madame accidentally glides across the passage, wears an aspect confirmatory of it. She catches the word "daughter," coupled with a request to speak to herself, and graciously intimates that he may be shown into the room of audience for humble visitors. The lady's brow, however, soon contracts, for the father of Ann King announces that he has had an alarm-

ing report of her state of health, and is come to inquire into the particulars.

"Has the young person written to frighten you?"

"No, Madame: the doctor who attends her has written to say he considers her in a dangerous way; and that she must have country air and careful nursing, and no time to be lost."

The bell is pulled, not very gently, and Ann King is summoned.

"No time to lose, I agree," repeats the principal, as the astonished child hastens to her dismayed parent, who scarcely recognizes her. "You, Miss King, it seems, have carried on a plot, privately, with a gentleman (who he may be is best known to yourself) to get away from this house, and without fulfilling your part of the agreement. You have entered upon the second year, to be sure, and I might insist on your working it out; but I shall not prevent your following your own plans; therefore I have to beg you will gather together what belongs to you, and consider yourself at liberty to return with your father. I shall find some one to supply your place, better acquainted with what is proper, and more ready to conform to the rules of the house."

Is this an exaggerated description? We shall see by and by. Meanwhile, there is no remedy save one, which the father, heart-struck by the aspect of his dying child, will not hear of—an attempt to obtain permission for a longer stay. Refunding any part of the money paid down is out of the question on Madame's side; the agreement was not so framed as to meet the

present contingency. If Ann recovers, she may make the experiment of demanding to finish the term of her engagement—but such an *if!* With emotions in which it is hard to say whether sorrow or gladness predominates, she makes her few and hurried preparations, takes an abrupt general leave of her companions, under the frowning observation of the principal assistant, and stepping into a hackney coach, is soon, with her parent, set down at the door of the large, fashionable dressmaker's where Frances has been apprenticed for the same period that Ann has passed at Madame A.'s.

With no small dread, no slight trepidation, they await the appearance of the young girl, who is, as they are informed, not within; and having procured a promise that she shall be sent to see them in the evening, they take up their quarters at a respectable inn, not far off.

CHAPTER V.

THE YOUNG DRESS-MAKER.

FRANCES agreeably surprises her father by the comparative healthfulness of her appearance, and the activity of her step; but in one respect she is more changed than Ann. Her childishness is succeeded by the aspect of more years than she has really numbered, and her rusticity by a decidedly town air. At first glance, all was smart, and self-satisfied; a closer investigation may discover the traces of some things far remote from her natural temper and character — restlessness, discontent, and a degree of fretful impatience quite painful to detect. She has not seen Ann for many weeks, and is shocked at her appearance. On hearing how matters stand, she bursts forth into a complaining philipic against all employers.

"To be sure, there is not a pin to choose among them: all are bad alike. No two people can be more different than your high and mighty French Madame, and our industrious, homely Mrs. B.; but though one goes to bed betimes, and lets her workwomen slave alone all night, and the other never takes eyes off us while she can keep them open, nor lets a skirt be

shaped without interfering, there's as much kind feeling and justice in one as in the other. How to get the most out of us is all they think of."

"You don't look, though, as if you had been as hard-worked as your poor sister."

"Yes, father, I have, but in a different way, and as wrongfully as she. Did not you bind me to learn the business thoroughly, and pay down a good premium for that?"

"Certainly I did: and clinched it faster and better than poor Ann's, as Mrs. B. shall find if she's up to any tricks."

"Well, father, at this day I don't know any more of the business, rightly speaking, than when I came here."

"Then you must have been idle, child."

"I have worked like your plough-horse, and much harder, and longer, and more fatiguingly, and in worse weather, too."

"What has the weather to do with dress-making?"

"Why, all my time is passed in matching. You see, we are always running short of this silk or that; or we want a trimming or a ribbon, exactly to suit a particular colour. In a large house like ours, and full employ for a lot of ladies as fanciful and particular as you please, it is more than one person can do to see after the matching. Unfortunately for me, they soon found out I had a quick eye and a light foot, and I was set about it, and have been kept at it to this hour. Not a bit of regular teaching in the business have I had, and my place is no better than an errand-girl's."

"It has agreed with thee well enough, though;" and the father's eye rested on the emaciated, almost deformed figure of Ann, now shaken with a fit of coughing.

"Ah, Anny, I can cough too, sometimes. You should hear me after I've been hurried out of a work-room like an oven, in a drenching rain, or ankle-deep in melted snow, to dance attendance in fifty shops, perhaps down to the other end of Holborn, perhaps farther, to catch a particular shade of sewing silk, and bring home my skeins just as dinner is over, and be sent out again without taking my bonnet off, or changing my wet stockings, for a remnant of a satin of which, perhaps, there are not two in London. Then again, after devouring a bit of stale bread and what they call butter, to sit down, or stand up, running breadths or gathering shoulders, till I was dropping on the floor with the fatigue, and not time enough allowed to sleep a bit of it off. Coughs and sore throats, and shiverings in every limb, are my companions in bad weather; and on the hot days, without a breath of what *we* can call fresh air, it is even worse. But I suppose it must all go on, as I am not yet in a decline."

"Nor near it, Frances. You must not be so fretful, my child: we will speak to Mrs. B., and let her know that you are not apprenticed to do the work of a messenger: but we must take care to bargain that she does not confine you too much, or injure your health by keeping you always at the needle."

"You must change her nature then, father, or get an act of Parliament to fine her so high, that she will

lose more than she gains by it. But never mind that; my health must suffer either way; and I'd rather be employed day and night in my proper place, learning my business, and preparing to set up for myself, than knocked about in this degrading way."

"I am afraid there is some pride in this: you must remember, 'with the lowly is wisdom; and he that exalteth himself shall be abased.'"

"Abased!" The girl is trying her bonnet, and a bitter smile plays around her mouth as she prepares to go. Her father prepares to accompany her, but she hastily says, "No, no, don't go with me, it would only distress you. If you see the sights and hear the sounds that I am forced to hear and see in the streets of London every day, you will think a modest girl could hardly be much lower abased." She has hurried off, and Ann says, "It is too true, father: the language that a girl must listen to who goes alone about London, and hear addressed to herself, is dreadful. The young men in some shops too, where she is forced to wait, when silk-matching, will take advantage of her being so unprotected, and hurt her feelings, if they don't harden and pervert her, by the talk they hold. I was thinking of that more than of the fatigue, or other hardships belonging to her situation."

"Is that the case, Anny? then I'll stop it. My poor little lambkins! you are among wolves indeed, in this wicked place."

"Covetousness is a cruel wolf, father, and it seems to rule here. I wish you would make some inquiry of Mrs. B. as to how Frances passes the Sunday."

The reader must now take a peep into the establishment of a fashionable dress-maker, of which the front aspect greatly belied the interior, which was close, confined, low, narrow, and without any other ventilation than what was enjoyed in common with a range of stabling. Here Mrs. B. sits, the presiding genius of a large company of pale-faced assistants, over whom she watches with incessant care that each individual should, respectively, earn as much and cost as little as possible. A rule, alas! too generally adopted, and too consistently carried out in this commercial country.

No repulsive hauteur distinguishes the manner of Mrs. B. to her inferiors, neither does she cringe with fawning submission to those above her, and in this Frances appears to be more advantageously circumstanced than her sister was; but the evil resides in the system; every employer who adopts it is a screw-down upon her drudges, and it is the pressure, not the manner of applying it, that works the mischief. The existence, indeed, of a really benevolent feeling towards those who are constantly wronged in one point, is not possible on the part of the person inflicting the wrong. Conscience perpetually resisted, not only becomes hardened, but indurates the whole character. Humanity cries out for a mitigation of the labourer's toil: selfishness overrules the plea; and the individuals thus circumstanced, in whatever line of business placed, form a class, the unrelenting scourges of those beneath them.

Farmer King has made his complaints to Mrs. B. of his daughter's non-proficiency in the business that

she was apprenticed to learn, which she hears with eyebrows elevated in astonishment, remarking, "You must be aware, my good man, that I only engaged to teach dress-making: I cannot give her capacity nor industry to profit by what she learns. Indeed, some girls are so stupid that they can but work like machines—as soon as an idea becomes necessary, they are lost and bewildered."

"Frances is not one of those, ma'am: she is very clever and quick: and I suppose you don't make choice of fools to go about London and do so much in shops."

"This is the way with you all. Just now, I had a woman here almost crazy about her daughter being cooped up, as she calls it, at the needle all day, and not going out. Yours has plenty of air and exercise, as her looks show, and a precious good appetite too; and for this you come to make a complaint! However, I'll satisfy you both; for King shall have enough of the needle, and the other of the flags."

"I don't wish my girl to be too closely confined, ma'am."

"I dare say she will take care to avoid that; it is not her disposition to be much restrained. Have you anything more to detain me with?"

"I beg pardon, ma'am; but I wish to know how my daughter passes the Sunday."

"Like other people, I suppose."

"Where does she dine, ma'am?" is Ann's question; and her employer looks a little disconcerted.

"There is no mention of Sunday dinners in her indentures: she generally dines out."

"No mention of Sunday dinner!" exclaimed the father, "the words 'board and lodge' include every day's provision."

"Ay, Mr. King, every working day; and when they work on Sunday, they dine too, of course; and in very bad weather I often give a dinner to those who have not stipulated for it."

"And is it possible you cast all these young people out to seek their bread on the Lord's day?"

"By no means: there are only half a dozen or so who have not arranged to dine here."

"Well, ma'am, my child being under your care, and you being under an engagement to teach, and find her, I hope and expect she will be properly fed and looked after, from week's end to week's end."

"I can make no such promise: she must do as others do."

"Then, Mrs. B., I shall take her from you; that's all."

"I will not give up the indenture: her services are mine, so long as I keep to my plain engagement."

"Which I am sorry to say you have not done, ma'am."

"You must prove that, by a lawyer's plea; and farming succeeds better with you than it does with my brothers, if you have money to keep one in pay."

The poor man sighs: money never was so scarce with him, and the unexpected burden of his dying

daughter makes the case worse. The woman of business reads his looks, and the opportunity of doing a kind action without any cost to herself, or rather without the sacrifice of an unfair advantage, strikes her as irresistible.

"Well, as you seem uncomfortable about the girl, I will make an agreement to let her pass Sunday at home. You give me for the year £2 12*s*. which is, indeed, shamefully little to name, and she may dine with us."

The love of justice is strong in an honest Englishman's heart; he does not like to be a party to an unfair bargain, and resistance to so unwarrantable a demand is evidently strengthening in the father's open countenance; but a whisper from Ann decides him. He says nothing, until he has taken from his leathern purse the gold and silver — how little he can afford to lose it no one but himself knows — and laying it down, with his thumb still pressed on the money, hoarsely articulates, "Mistress, give me your promise in writing, that for one year my child is properly fed in your house on the Sundays."

"Why, no: I must decline giving any document that might interfere with the indentures already executed, and embarrass our dealings; but I'll tell you how we can manage it. We will call your daughter in, with one of my most respectable ladies, and they shall be witness to the promise."

This is done: Frances appears, with one of the first-hands, the particular favourite and helper of the principal, and in their presence the agreement is repeated.

"It's monstrous little to pay, though," lisps the first-hand.

"Is it not, dear? However, I love to do things in a liberal way, and to avoid reproaching people with poverty, or meanness either."

Frances, meanwhile, looks equally astonished and annoyed; and seeing the money about to be handed over, exclaims, "I have not the least wish to dine in this house on Sundays. I have not done so yet, except when kept in to work: and I would rather go to my friends."

The sight of the money has, however, quickened alike the hospitable feelings and the moral perceptions of her employer, who says, "I think, Miss King, that, as a modest young woman, you should prefer a respectable domestic party to gadding about in such a place as London, all day. Not that I pretend to know what agreeable acquaintances you may have all along to associate with. You never expressed the least wish to stay within on Sunday; but grumbled when you found it was required of you to do so."

"No, ma'am, I never asked you to let me dine here, after the first Sunday, when you turned me adrift, saying, there was no mention of it in the indentures, and you were not bound to feed me the day I did no work. That day I wandered about the squares and streets, ready to drop with hunger: no shop open, and if there had been, I was better taught than to deal in such a shop on the Lord's day. Eating-houses there were, but I had no courage to go into them, and so I kept a fast that day, went twice to churches, whose open

doors seemed to invite me to rest myself at least, and to remind me I had one friend at hand still. I resolved to do the same every Sunday, rather than be beholden to your charity for a dinner; but, one or another, acquaintance have shown me kindness since, so that I don't think I have gone without a dinner above three times. As you say, I grumbled when kept in, not at that, but being forced to work on the day that is given us to rest on; and when it is a sin and shame to make us break God's commandment. I have no difficulty now in finding friends to welcome me at their houses, and I meet kindness where I go."

"And nice young men into the bargain," simperingly whispers the first-hand.

"Frances, my child!"—and the father's voice is tremulous as he speaks, "listen to my charge. I have paid down the sum demanded for your next year's Sunday board; and if you would not add to my present griefs, promise me that you will always, in future, claim your right, and stop at home, except to go to church, and take a walk for your health."

"Oh, stay a little," says Mrs. B. "No such promises if you please. My house must not be made a prison, nor my comfort spoiled by the sulky looks of a person sitting at my table because she must. I can have no more time lost; so go back to your work; and you, Mr. King, have my promise before these witnesses, that your daughter shall always dine with my other young people when she chooses. I wish you a good morning, and a good journey. Your daughter Frances is in the best hands. I will do my duty by her."

"May you prosper accordingly as you do it!" is all that the father can say, before the door has closed upon them.

"Now, Ann, what reason is it you promised to give me for yielding to all the unjust demands of that woman? You whispered that you would convince me it was right and necessary to do so. Let's hear it all; for my stomach rose against being robbed."

"Did you hear, father, what the head-woman muttered about meeting nice young men; and see how poor dear Frances blushed?"

"I heard her, and it determined me to clinch the bargain, though I took no notice: for I feared somebody might lure the child into danger."

"That is it, father; and that is why I wanted you to interfere. One of our young ladies heard a deal, and told it to me, which made me very anxious about Frances; and I longed to be able to write to her: but except on Sunday I could not get the time to do it; and it was last Sunday night, in bed, I heard it first. One of the young journeywomen working, but not living at Mrs. B.'s, is a great friend of Frances. She has had a dreadfully hard life of it, and barely earned enough to keep her, having injured her health by exposure early and late to the raw air, and at the end of last season she was almost driven to ask charity. All of a sudden she moved into better lodgings, and had things in great comfort, almost in style, about her. Now, I am told, she will be obliged before long to give up going to Mrs. B.'s, and everything seems to confirm the sad story that she had purchased all these new

indulgences at a dearer price than the hardest of honest toil that a poor virtuous girl could undergo. There is a master to that house, father; he has a wife and family elsewhere; and the last two Sundays he had some young men dining there, when Frances and some other simple girls, not knowing this, were of the party, and"—

"Come back, come back directly! I'll remove my child in spite of all the indentures in the world."

"No, no, stop: you could do nothing. All I tell you is mere report, which may be false; and Frances would be made the victim, and her character taken away to save the credit of the house. I wrote her a long letter last night, and slipped it into her hand just now, warning her of the danger. She has been greatly exposed, by being sent out to the shops constantly, and has got too much accustomed to the flattering, familiar talk of the young men in that line. The gentlemen I heard of are quite of a different rank, and more dangerous to a girl so much off her guard. Let us see the effect that my warning has on Frances; together with your payment for her dinners at home. Was not it worth paying for?"

"Bless you, girl, bless you! I'd have sold the coat off my back sooner than not pay it, if I had known this. Still, I must get the child away."

"I doubt if you can, father. Employers must have some security that the young people they take won't be removed in a fit of caprice; so the law makes indentures pretty strong, and they can't be cancelled without a magistrate sees good cause for it."

"Any magistrate, being a father, would see cause enough here."

"I am afraid not. I know a much worse case where the complaint was dismissed, and the binding confirmed, and the girl's friends hardly got off without an action for defamation, though it was all too true. Money governs everything, father. It is badly got sometimes; and then there it is, to spend in defending that bad way. The rich may do what they will, so everybody makes haste to be rich: the poor must do as they can, and nobody likes to be poor. Oppression is a grievous thing to bear, but they that oppress don't seem to know they are doing so, though their fellow-creatures are perishing before their eyes, and have nobody to help them."

"Yes, girl, they have. There is One, of whom it is said, 'The poor committeth himself to thee; thou art the helper of the friendless.'"

CHAPTER VI.

CONSEQUENCES.

TURN not away, gentle lady; you know not how a look, a single look, of commiserating sympathy may soften the heart, and melt the still womanly nature of that miserable being. She is not so old as she appears, nor so fierce. A short career of vice has bloated her cheek and wrinkled her brow; and the desperate struggle that an Englishwoman's love of liberty induced her to make, when seized by that policeman, has produced an aggravation of all the bad traits but recently developed in her once open countenance. If you had seen her in girlish glee gamboling with the young lambs,—if you had heard her clear voice mingling with the lark's song, when the dew of morning was yet fresh on her father's pretty meadow,—nay, if you had beheld her deep sensibility, her unaffected anguish, when she bent over the early grave of her sister Ann, or witnessed the filial love that wiped away the tears of her sorrowing parents, and soothed their bitter grief, during the short, the last visit she ever paid to that sacred spot, her home; you would not think she was already so perverted, so ut-

terly cut off from the human family, as not to claim from you, the sister of her nature, a look, a tear, a prayer, on her behalf.

Do you ask what wrought this painful change? It was wrought by THE LOVE OF MONEY. Not on her part, poor girl! she only desired to be taught a respectable business, that she might become the helper of her parents, and secure a moderate competence to herself. But the root of all evil was planted where her lot was cast; and for filthy lucre's sake the claims of justice were overlooked, the pleadings of womanhood for a youthful female charge overborne; and Frances King, no longer allowed by her father to act as the out-door drudge of an establishment of which she was the articled inmate, was set down to work, according to the original contract, and worked well nigh to death. But her high spirits, her lively temper, and vigorous constitution, stood the shock better than many around her did. Her father's generosity, and his parting injunction, her sister's warning letter, together with the strong convictions of her own mind, produced a great revolution in her feelings, as did the new arrangement in her habits and prospects. She worked as early and late, devoured her meals as rapidly, and exerted her naturally good abilities as perseveringly as even her employer could demand. She became a very superior hand in the business, but being still an apprentice, her talents were kept in the fullest requisition without any other advantage accruing to herself than the stock of knowledge and experience in that line which she was laying in. For some time she resisted all temptations

to visit the acquaintance whose shame had become public, or to go anywhere on the Sunday, save to the house of prayer, and for a quiet walk with a very steady companion; but the Sunday's dinner was sorely grudged, and she saw it. Dissatisfied looks, remarks rather levelled at than addressed to her, and the many annoyances by which a meal can be poisoned by those who wish to do it, all combined to make it more intolerable as time passed on; while the inevitable effect on her nerves of such perpetual labour and confinement in a vitiated atmosphere, made her doubly sensitive to it all. Nor did she suffer alone; others were similarly goaded; and in an evil hour they resolved to enjoy one day's freedom from these annoyances, to try among their respective acquaintances for a mouthful of food unembittered with unkindness.

Frances did not seek out her former associate; but, alas! the snares laid for young girls are as numerous as are the intended victims; and the wrongs inflicted by a heartless woman, in her pursuit of gain, exposed the unhappy Frances to the yet greater, more enduring wrong, that heartless man inflicts, in the pursuit of unlawful gratification. To trace her course into this abyss of wretchedness and guilt, would answer no good purpose: suffice it to say, she fell; and though a sudden, awful check was given to her yet undiscovered career of guilt, by the death of Ann, whose burial she obtained leave to attend; and though she returned from that scene of mourning most firmly resolved to break forever with her profligate paramour, and to transgress no more, yet in the absence of all

watchfulness, all care for her body or soul, all that could tend to make the place of her abode even tolerable; and in the presence of continual suffering, enervation, and excitement, her good resolutions were short-lived indeed. She was soon cast off, and soon exulted over by those who had, through mischievous curiosity, traced her steps and discovered her haunts. But she had tasted of good cheer, had experienced the temporary renovation that wine and other stimulating drinks supply; and without the means of procuring them, she dared to satisfy the craving at the expense of another sinful alliance. The exhaustion induced by a very large and pressing order for work, she met with these treacherous restoratives, and took so much that their effect was apparent. Her case was not new nor strange; but Frances was never a favourite, and favouritism is the only possible refuge of those in her position — the labourers in an establishment.

Hence scorn, obloquy, coarse reproach, and violent recrimination, until she was wrought up to an act of positive rebellion against the principal, occasioning a complete fracas. Her indentures were within six months of expiration, and mercy might have suggested a proposal to part with her quietly; but what has mercy to do with the love of gain? She was taken before a magistrate, the worst possible case made out, and the indentures cancelled, under circumstances so public that they forbade the hope of obtaining admission into any other establishment. She struggled for a while; she abandoned drink, she hid herself from her acquaintance, and made shirts at three-halfpence

each; but her broken constitution and shame-stricken mind could not long hold out. No one came to offer to her the wine and milk without money and without price; she knew, she felt herself to be a most grievous sinner; she remembered that it is the pure in heart who shall see God; she knew not where or how to obtain that new heart which alone is accounted pure; and how could the minister of a parish containing some thirty thousand inhabitants seek out the wounded souls that were hiding their heads in filthy abodes of poverty and shame?

The career of open, acknowledged crime has not been long; her days of natural life, how few and evil! yet her race is nearly finished. Hard labour in a prison house, which justice must now award, will wear away the slender thread of life. You can no more snatch Frances King from the verge of the grave than you can bring back Ann from its darksome depths: but, oh, lady, you can do much for the thousands who have not yet advanced beyond recall on the path that leads either to bodily or to moral destruction. There are, at this moment, in London alone, not less than FIFTEEN THOUSAND young women, from the age of fourteen upwards, employed *in*, not merely working *for*, the millinery and dress-making establishments of fifteen hundred employers. Among the latter, there are not a few who deeply deplore the cruel system of wrong and oppression briefly and faintly sketched in the foregoing pages; and who, if encouraged and upheld by the ladies of England, would pledge themselves to a line of conduct which at present they can only pursue under heavy disadvantages. These individu-

als, who feel as women ought to do the wrongs that women suffer, adopt excellent rules, and take exceeding pains to render the situation of their subordinates as comfortable, and as little injurious as possible. But much discomfort *must* attach to such a calling — much injury *must* ensue; and the utmost we can all do, in influencing the ladies who employ, and the principal who engages and directs these young people in the task of preparing the articles that adorn their persons, can only mitigate the evil in some degree.

The changeableness of fashion, the evanescence of each succeeding whim, produce a brisk and most hurrying demand for new articles. This causes a great press of work: ladies, having waited to the last moment for the appearance of some novelty in costume, and then being eager to figure among the first who adopt it, must urge the poor operatives to the utmost of their speed; especially when some event, such as a court day, or other extensive assemblage of "rank and fashion," multiplies the number of demands, and limits the time of preparation. Mourning, too, is not ordered until death has set his seal upon the insensible clay; and then it is urgently called for in as short a time as possible. Mourning is, of all things, most constantly required; it is also, of all things, the most injurious to those who work upon it. Partial blindness is the certain, total blindness the probable, lot of such as labour in houses especially undertaking this branch of the business; and very severe injuries accrue to the sight of those who only work at it incidentally with the continuance required at each task. Among milliners,

the black velvet decorations, so much in request even out of mourning, are ruinous to young eyes; and cases of opthalmia to a wide extent follow on a general mourning.

All this appears in evidence, taken before the authorised commissioners; and it also appears, on the testimony of a highly respectable and experienced surgeon, who for twenty years has had much practice among this branch of labourers, that "in no trade or manufactory whatever is the labour to be compared to that of the young dress-makers: no men work so long. This is corroborated by official authority. *It would be impossible for any animal to work so continuously with so little rest.*" Any animal! is not woman an animal? Truly, though God made her to be an help meet for man, the unnatural exactions of pride, and pomp, and frivolity have made her a beast of burden to her own sex. The charge is one that the whole female world of England, elevated above the necessity of earning their bread, should rise, and cast from them. Not that they can deny it; but they can, it is hoped, assert their ignorance of the existence of this most galling slavery among their countrywomen, and declare they will henceforth be guiltless of the sin.

London is, indeed, the headquarters of this as of most other national iniquities; but as fashion has everywhere its apes, so has it everywhere its victims; in large towns especially. There is hardly an establishment in any genteel neighbourhood that does not, to use the expressive language of one who repeated it to the author, "kill a girl a year;" but if to the list of

killed were superadded all who are mortally wounded, and marked for premature, though not immediate death, what a fearful return we should have!

It has been shown in evidence, that, during the two "seasons" in town, (April to August, and October to Christmas,) "it is not uncommon to begin at six, and even at five, A. M., and to go on till two or three in the morning: sometimes from four A. M. to twelve at night. Some witnesses, who were in a position freely to state the facts, mention that they have for three months successively worked twenty hours out of the twenty-four." . . . . "It is the common practice, on particular occasions, such as drawing-rooms, wedding or mourning orders, for the work to be continued all night. One witness worked continually, without going to bed, from four o'clock on Thursday morning to half past ten on Sunday morning."

That, "during the season, no fixed time is allowed for meals; the general statement of the witnesses is, that about ten minutes are allowed for breakfast, fifteen or twenty minutes for dinner, fifteen minutes or less for tea, and the same for supper, if that meal is not deferred, which is more usual, till the work is over: even if that be eleven or twelve o'clock. Cold mutton, salt beef, and hard puddings are frequently the only food provided for dinner."

It has been proved that the work-rooms which the commissioner examined were, "with a few exceptions, too small for the number of workers, nor were any efficient means of ventilation provided; so that from this and other defects, the rooms were complained of

as being at one time cold, and at other times suffocatingly hot. A surgeon states, that he has known one house where the young women worked in a perfectly dark kitchen, which was lighted night and day with gas. . . . The sleeping-rooms are often crowded and confined. One medical man speaks of having seen five young persons in one bed, in an attic."

It is shown, that, "The understanding on which the apprentice pays a certain sum of money, frequently of considerable amount, is, that she shall be taught all branches of the business; but it not unfrequently happens that the apprentices are kept at plain work, or are taught only a part of the business, so that at the end of the term, they have either to pay for proper instruction or to give their services gratuitously for a considerable period. . . . The journeywomen, excepting superior hands, receive very poor wages; and many of them, being engaged only for the season, at the end of which they are thrown out of employment, their slender means are soon exhausted, and they are driven to the most severe distress, sometimes to prostitution."

It is stated, that, "In some houses, no meals except breakfast are provided on Sunday for the apprentices, improvers, &c. A case is stated of a young person who walked about the streets all day, in consequence of being denied a dinner at her employer's. As no distinction is made in favour of those who have no friends in London, such treatment is likely to lead to the greatest moral evil."

And the evidence of the most highly respectable medical men, attested by their names, includes the fol-

lowing facts:—"Their constitution receives a shock from which it never recovers; they may leave off work for a period, they may go into the country to their friends, but they never regain their health. . . . Indigestion in its most severe form, palpitation of the heart, pulmonary affections threatening consumption, and various affections of the eyes; great constitutional weakness, indicated by a degree of pallor, or bloodless condition of the body," prevail. "It is not unusual for the girls and young women to faint at their work. These attacks, depending on the condition just noticed, joined to the exhaustion of long hours and heated rooms, were described to me as being very alarming, and often even requiring medical aid. . . . Distortion of the spine, and consequent projection of one shoulder, are very common: also cases of severe and obstinate ulcers in young dress-makers. All the witnesses, medical and others, spoke of the very frequent occurrence of consumption, which carries off a large number of victims. It is a serious aggravation of all this evil, that the unkindness of the employer very frequently causes these young persons, when they become unwell, to conceal their illness, for fear of being sent out of the house; and in this manner the disease often becomes increased in severity, or is even rendered incurable. Some of the principals are so cruel as to object to the young women obtaining medical assistance."*

Such are a few of the plain facts that have been col-

* Report by R. D. Grainger, Esq.

lected, not merely from the sufferers, but from many most respectable employers, who, lamenting over the extent of an evil which they, individually, do their utmost to obviate within their own limited sphere, but against which no opposition will succeed that is not powerfully backed by the ladies of England, have voluntarily exhibited this frightful state of things, and appealed for help to remedy it. We have not tinted the picture so darkly as a strict adherence to truth would have warranted our doing, because such a course was not requisite: we only wished to show the natural results of the system.

The name of Ann King may not be traced on the village grave-rail of any young milliner who has died of consumption, brought on exclusively by such means as we have described in her case; but every grave-yard in London, and many a one the land over, would be studded with such recitals, did each sepulchre bear above it the history of its mouldering tenant.

The name of Frances King may not be enrolled on the police-report of any station-house, as that of a young dress-maker, goaded by her employment to prostitution, to drinking, to public disturbance, and a jail: but many, many are yearly cut off in one or another stage of this fearful course. And these are surely wrongs, cruel, tyrannical, cowardly wrongs, that cannot be palliated, that ought not to be tolerated in a Christian land. Oh, when the great apostle of the Gentiles warned his female converts from paganism, "women professing godliness," against too great a love for "putting on of apparel," or adorning themselves in "costly array," did

the spirit that was in him foreshew what should come of that worldly lust in fair and free and happy Britain, when at her height of national glory and spiritual privilege? We cannot empty this ocean of vanity in one class, and selfishness in another; but we may, God helping us, raise a breakwater that shall curb its force and prevent its bursting in, to bring ruin, destitution and death to the hearths of England's cottages — the most humble, perhaps, but not the least independent, or the least sacred and valuable among her cherished homes.

It is the peculiar work of Christianity, wherever it is established, to elevate woman from the debased position in which she is elsewhere placed. How lovely is the spectacle of female devotion and fidelity, love stronger than death, manifested by women, and those generally of the lowlier classes, towards our Lord Jesus and his apostles! The continual mention made of them in the New Testament is very remarkable; and He, the Lord, who changes not, looks down from the height of his glory on the very humblest of his handmaidens toiling below, no less benignantly than in the days of his flesh; he beheld the sorrows, heard the plaint, and answered the prayer of those who appealed to him. How, then, dwelleth the love of Christ in us, if we connive at the cruel oppression exercised over the helpless young females of our land? How dare we profess His holy name, and assume to be partakers in the joy of his salvation, while lending ourselves to this worst of wrong and robbery, the wrong and robbery of the poor? Is this the mind that was in Christ Jesus?

There is one female named, who went forth to the dance, as one of courtly splendour, and elicited even royal applause, while captivating a throng of nobles by her external appearance; yet, who, in that very act, brought upon her soul the guilt of innocent blood. May God in His rich mercy deliver the daughters of England from such a snare!

CHAPTER VII.

THE VILLAGER'S EXCHANGE.

THE great privilege of woman in domestic life is certainly that of making man's home so attractive as to counteract the many inducements that may cross his path to become a rover from it. This privilege we find especially prized among the humbler classes of our countrywomen, wherever the march of demoralization has not trampled down and blighted the fairest flowers that blossom in the wilderness of man's sojourn. Some may indeed fulfil their task less cheerfully, less zealously, than others; but there are certain duties so manifestly appertaining to the wife and mother, that wholly to neglect them would be doing violence not only to the best but to the strongest impulses of her nature. To nourish her little ones; to clothe their bodies, watch over their health, and protect them from danger; to clean and order her dwelling, however poor; to cook her husband's food, wash and mend his wearing apparel, and study the most frugal outlay of his earnings and her own; — these are tasks from which no English female desires to shrink, and the ready fulfilment of which is, of all things, best calculated to retain the

preference of early days, to attach the man to his own dwelling, and to save him from the drunkenness, the vice, the misery, of those whose hours of leisure are passed in a beer-shop.

In John Smith and his wife Alice, we are now to contemplate an instance of this merciful provision of God, where extreme poverty, bringing with it a long train of severe privations, had, indeed, often depressed the spirits and debilitated the frames of the humble family, but never interposed between the wife and her legitimate duties. There might, indeed, be scarcely a chair to sit down upon, and the solid old walnut-tree table had been sold for the difference in price between so substantial an article and the rickety bit of deal that now stood in its place; but those chairs were clean, and the table scoured into as near an approach to its natural colour as past neglect and ill usage would admit of. Hardly a handful of hot ashes mouldered in the grate, but the hearth was clean swept, the bars rubbed, and even the battered candlestick compelled to shine, on the projecting ledge that formed a mantel-piece. Patch after patch, of such textures and such colours as chance placed within her reach had been laid by the careful mother on every garment in their united wardrobe, and formed a motley display; yet was every piece neatly put into its place, and often had a stitch in time stopped the progress of a rent not yet perceptible to a less watchful eye. Water was not scarce, neither was a price set on it, and all that water, plentifully applied, could do to cleanse and freshen the poor children, and to render their garments sweet,

was liberally done. All this, too, was a matter of course; Alice took no credit to herself for doing what it would have been a sore trial to her to leave undone; and Smith did not praise his home — he only loved it.

The failure of his accustomed employment, by the absorption of his former master's little farm into the leviathan fields of the squire, drove poor Smith from one shift to another, until his only resource was the board of guardians, who sat to superintend the affairs of the union only four miles off. His case was taken into consideration, and work was provided by the parish. He was set to break stones on the road, and a shilling a day was allotted to him. This seemed at first a great bonus; but a little experience proved the utter impossibility of providing rent, firing, clothing, and food out of it. Besides, Smith was disabled for nearly a week from the effects of a blow accidentally falling on his hand from the sharp hammer of a fellow-workman; and no allowance was made for the period of his absence from his place of toil; the cause being attributed to his unpardonable awkwardness, if not to design. This week's sufferings completely decided the family as to their future plans; and we are to accompany them to W ——, a town abundant in metal works, with their five children, the youngest being under two years of age, and the eldest eleven. The union has supplied them with means of travelling thither, and they arrive to take possession of a new abode.

Turning off from the main street into a narrow lane, they proceed some way, and then again strike off to a covered passage, where breathing is difficult to a party

who never before inhaled other air than that of the open country. At the end of this passage they emerge again into a sort of labyrinth of hovels, interspersed with buildings somewhat more resembling small, though very rude houses, whence the clang of forges and hammers, coming in contact with metal substances, with the hot breath of an occasional furnace passing over the cheek, indicate workshops. Here the faces are so begrimed with dirt, and the clothes so ragged, filthy, and little calculated to answer the purposes of decency, that Alice Smith hopes they are not destined to lodge in such a vicinity: but another and a more miserable-looking district is still in perspective, consisting of a very narrow row of one-storied tenements, opposite to which are piled heaps of cinder dirt, varied with every species of unclean accumulation, while in numerous little hollows that bestud the unpaved ground, and throughout a narrow gutter, are collected compounds differing in colour from the pale yellow of liquid clay to the light green that mantles on a pool of decomposed vegetable and copper refuse, and the shining metallic brown of that which has served the purposes of the forge. She shudders at the sights and sickens with the smells of this repulsive region; but is happily ignorant of the life-destroying properties abounding in these loathsome exhalations, when the rain shall have stirred them to the bottom of their dingy receptacles, or a sultry sun drawn forth the steaming venom to hang upon the dull, heavy, motionless air of a region where no current of that life-sustaining element can pursue its healthful course of perpetual change.

Into one of the hovels they enter, as already agreed on, through the instrumentality of a friend; and Alice loses no time in spreading their small store of provisions, as if wishing to withdraw the attention of her wondering companions from the scene around them.

She does, indeed, hope that the internal aspect of the dwelling will greatly alter for the better under her accustomed cares; but what shall reconcile her to seeing her little ones associate with the squalid children who are now playing among the cinder heaps, or flinging stones into the little pools, the putrid contents of which splash up into their faces, and further soil their filthy rags of clothing? Industry, however, will do wonders; and hope, in the bosom of an affectionate woman, is not to be extinguished by ordinary means.

The door of the hovel has been left open, partly because it wanted fastenings to close it, and partly that the air within was even more intolerable than that from without. Smith is now trying to discover the particular defect that prevents its shutting, for the idle stragglers who come to gaze on the strangers, their broad stare, rude remarks, and general appearance of what he considers incivility, have become very annoying. A young man, his face begrimed beyond all possibility of ascertaining its natural color, who had been poising a hammer on his fore-finger, while taking a leisurely survey of the new comers, now suddenly pushes back a knot of peeping children, and with a rough voice of evident good nature, accosts the master of the dwelling: "Well, old boy, let's see to the doctoring of your door: I'll warrant a nail or two will

set all right." The wrenching away of a crooked staple, and righting of a twisted latch, which is presently effected by the practised workman's hand, soon removes the obstacle, and from the pockets of his jacket he produces what is needed to complete the fastenings. All being right, and many thanks returned, the young artisan proceeds to inquire what line of business they are about to embark in.

"I am promised employment in Mr. ——'s screw manufactory."

"As to that, your wife may get work easy enough at the screws, but you won't be taken in."

"Why not?"

"'Cause women are all the thing there. Out of a hundred workers, you won't find over ten men, and it's the same rule they go by at all the shops, in business that isn't out and out beyond a woman's strength."

"'Tis a bad rule, and one I won't agree to. Why should women be chosen before men?"

"Oh, the masters find they work harder and take less; and that's all they care for."

"And pray what do the men do?"

"Stop at home, cook the victuals, see after the house, and carry the baby to be suckled, if there is such a thing. But you need not look so black: I see you have children big enough to mind the little ones; and your wife's earnings will be well nigh enough for you; only you must get them two biggest lasses in at the pin-makers', or somewhere else. Why, you may be comfortable enough so."

Smith still looks incredulous, and angry. After a

pause, he says, "Suppose, now, I did as you say, and let the wife and girls go out to work; who's to mend and make, to wash and scour, and tidy up the place of evenings? Do you think I'd molly about such things myself?"

"Why, no; I s'pose not: they must scramble on as others do; and as for the evenings, just step over a bit, and I'll show you as neat a tap as any in the place, where you may take your pot and pipe, and leave mollying to them that it belongs to."

Poor Alice hears this with a beating heart: the idea of toiling for her family is welcome enough to her mind; but that her husband should spend his evenings at an alehouse is more than she can reconcile herself to. Before, however, a word can pass her lips, Smith has replied to the obliging proposal of his new acquaintance, "No, no, my good fellow, I know a trick worth two of that. This arm has earned a living for my wife and children by honest labour, and so it shall still do. If the mother and girls must work, it shall be under my eye; and they shan't be made slaves of, nor yet have to reproach me with spending their wages in drink. Thank you kindly for your good will, but we are not the sort of people to come into such fashions."

"Well, they that go to Rome must do as them at Rome does. When you've been round to look for work, you'll know better. Meantime, I'll make bold to advise you: keep Mr. —— to his promise to employ your wife, or she may go farther and fare worse."

Night has passed, and the morning sun would shine upon the eyes of the rustic family, if its beams could

gain admittance through so dense an opposing mass of noxious exhalations, and penetrate the dead, broken wall that bounds the opposite cinder heaps towards the east. But no such wonted rays were necessary to rouse them now from slumber; the discordant clang of innumerable hammers has done that long ago, intermingled with loud talking, oaths, and vile language, such as the parents would not willingly have permitted their children to overhear. The slender remains of yesterday's store are soon devoured, and Smith is about to sally forth, to explore the town, when the same young man who had already been his informant passes the door, swinging his hammer, and gives a nod of good-natured recognition, saying, "Are you going my way?"

"I'm going any way that will bring me to a day's work."

"Then come along, and I'll show you the screw manufactory."

It was not far off; but sights, and smells, and sounds of offence, more than could be found within many a mile of John Smith's village home, lay between his present abode and the place of destination. He enters the workshop, dumb with surprise at the scene before him, and secretly convinced that his companion had spoken truth. Not above one in ten of the artisans is a man; women of all ages are stationed among the machinery pursuing their avocation, and in the midst of what Smith regards as frightful dangers; for the straps crossing in every direction over his head, and moving swift as lightning in all parts of the room,

with wheels whirring, shafts revolving, and horizontal stones flying round at a terrific rate, while the clang of a hundred hammers going at once salutes his ear; these things almost paralyze the astonished rustic, who has never before witnessed such a complication of machinery, never heard such a terrible discord of noises, nor even imagined their possible existence.

While he pauses for some encouragement, the foreman approaches to inquire his business; and being told by his companion that he is a country labourer in search of employment, remarks they have an overstock of such hands already, and can take in none but females. Smith names the person who promised him a recommendation to that firm, and is answered that it was understood he had a wife, able and willing to work, for whom they could find employment at once. But the heart of the English yeoman rises against this: "I'll make bold, sir, to look about me, before I set a woman to work instead of me. Mayhap you can direct me to some place where an able-bodied man, willing to turn his hand to any honest business, may get employed."

"Indeed I can't, my good fellow. Business is slack just now, and hands more than plenty among the men. Why should not your wife do the same as other women? Why, here are mothers of six or eight children, working all day, as merry as larks, and none the worse for their industry. I say, Betty," tapping a woman near him on the shoulder, "do you find yourself the worse in health for your work here?"

"No, sir, I don't; I'm very well off, and makes no complaints."

While she spoke, Smith noticing some dirty rags wrapped round her fingers, observes, she seems to have got a hurt.

"No, I ain't; these bits keep my knuckles from the stone: nobody need be hurt that can take care of their own fingers."

A good-humoured laugh accompanying the words, together with the woman's generally healthy and well-fed appearance, remove some part of Smith's repugnance; but he is not yet reconciled to the idea.

"Well, sir, by your leave, I'll go look about for myself; and if the worst comes to the worst, 'tis only sending my missus here for a few weeks till times mend."

"Nothing more. We give good wages and constant employ; and none of our people ever wish to leave us."

But as Smith quits the premises, he observes one thing that makes him fully resolve never to let any female of his family work there. The arrangement of outhouses is such as to set common decency at defiance; the honest rustic's cheek burns with shame and indignation as he notices the constant outrage to which modesty must be exposed, for lack of a very obvious needful separation in that department.

"I'll tell you what," he says to his new acquaintance, "we poor folks in the country are not over-nice; but this beats all the indecency I ever heard of down there. I've done with this manufactory, at any rate."

"If you mean to wait till you find a place where

they manage any better, you'll be long out of work. 'Tis the same all over the town."

"It's a shame to any Christian land."

"I've heard say so, and maybe, if I hadn't been brought up to it, I might think the same. As it is, nobody minds it here."

But Smith minds it; and with indignant sorrow of heart he ascertains the truth of the declaration that the same scandalous disregard of morality, and, indeed, of right manly feeling, prevails in all directions; not to save money, for it would have cost nothing more to commence on a right plan; but to avoid the trouble of making a regulation, or of enforcing it when made.

The sensitive modesty of the upper classes will doubtless be shocked by the bare allusion to this subject. In what have the wives and daughters of the poor so offended that they should be placed beyond the bounds of such defences as guard even the ears of the more affluent sisters from the hearing of things, the grossest practical abominations of which are hourly fixed upon them? Wo to the land because of offences! and of all the wo-working offences that can be named, that of driving from our female population the grace of shame-facedness, and hardening them in the daily practice of compulsory indecency, is among the worst. We cannot spare our more refined readers the pain of these allusions: God grant that their sensitive delicacy may thereby be directed into such a manifestation as shall lead to the throwing of a shield of protection over their wronged and helpless countrywomen!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

WHILE Smith made his round of inquiry, Alice had gleaned some information from her neighbours, which convinced her that she must make up her mind to close with the first offer of employment; and now, on hearing the result of his expedition to the screw manufactory, she resolves to go the next morning, avowedly to view the premises, but with a secret determination to engage herself at once. Her husband relaxes in his opposition, partly because he has too much reason to fear that it will prove inevitable in the end, and partly from the low, depressed feeling already stealing over him from the uncongenial influences of this new atmosphere, the dark, dull aspect of his miserable abode, and the spectacle of brutified human nature surrounding him on all sides.. He has always been a good, a hearty, an industrious field-labourer, working early and late to provide for his family; but nothing like the cares of a household have ever pressed upon him. With clock-work regularity he has gone forth to his occupation; and the manual labour of the day fairly done, the extra hour of daylight has been de-

voted to keeping his own slip of garden neat, mending his thatch, white-washing his room, or listening while his daughter Polly read out of her school-books some easy little tale, or practised the scripture repetition in which she hoped to be perfect by the next Sunday. Alice, rightly considering eight or ten hours toil an ample task for man, had always promoted his perfect relaxation when at home; and by her excellent management prevented his being troubled with any annoyances there. Consequently, when out of his regular work, Smith felt that he was in an element of repose; and now, having no garden to interest him, no old acquaintance with whom to discuss the weather, state of crops, and village politics, over the low paling of that dear little distant cottage, he could only lounge about a new, uninteresting spot, so positively disgusting externally, that it made the luxury of a short pipe in its innermost recess irresistible. Thus the afternoon hours had passed, and the morning brought an increase of that wretched feeling of indolence which puts a man out of temper with himself, and casts a gloom over all surrounding objects. He sees Alice, towards noon, tying on a clean apron, brushing her blue Sunday cloak with great care, and evidently desirous to make the best of her poor appearance in the eyes of those to whom she was about to become a suitor for work.

"Ay, ay, lass, you may tidy yourself up for a show; but you'll find it hard to be dirty enough for the place you're going to."

He reaches his hat with a sigh, and prepares to accompany her.

"Don't go, John; I'd rather you looked after the little ones, and I'll take Polly for company. I have my wits about me, and if it comes to hiring, I shall make a better bargain if you ben't by; for they'd shame you out of making too much of me."

"Well, maybe you're right, for I do feel it a burning shame to take you to such a market as that. But mind you make as short an agreement as you can; for work I will, the minute I can find employ."

"You know I must needs give over before long — for a time at least."

"Ay, that makes it a greater hardship for you to be slaving now." Then suddenly jumping up, he adds, "Take off your bonnet, Ally, for I *will* get work, and you *shall* stop at home."

"It's no use your trying: it would be weeks first; and where is the victuals to come from while we wait till something turns up? Besides, this is Saturday, and to-morrow we can do nothing. I don't deny it's unnatural to take women into their work-shops, and leave men to starve, when they would gladly labour; but as it is so, John, we can't help ourselves. There, little Jenny's waking; just stand betwixt, while I slip out, or she'll cry after me."

The foreman of the screw manufactory, well pleased with Alice Smith's healthful, active appearance, and being just now so short of new female hands, that he is actually in dread of being obliged to hire a man or boy, is exceedingly gracious, and the bargain is concluded without delay. Alice inwardly shrinks from everything about her — the machinery, the nature of

the work, and the aspect of those employed. She would rather wash for the whole parish, or scour the floors from dawn to midnight, than become one of such a party in such a place; but the thought of her helpless children, and her husband at present no less helpless, has power to overcome every repugnant feeling. She leaves the premises a hired labourer of the firm, with an injunction to come early on the Monday morning.

Smith hears it in silence: self-reproach stings him; but why? There is no species of work, however laborious, however degrading, that he would not eagerly accept, and bless the hand which offered it, rather than see the mother of his children going forth to such unseemly drudgery. But female labour is a more marketable commodity, and they who grasp the means of living, and to whom tens of thousands must look for daily food, will bestow it only as best accords with the suggestions of self-interest. Poor Smith has as yet no cause for self-reproach: at home he had no hand in the transfer of the small farm to the large landholder, nor has he a voice in regulating the labour market in the place to which he is now exiled. He takes off his coat, that his careful wife may direct Polly how to strengthen a place where another rent is threatened, while she herself gets ready the childrens' well-patched clothes for the morrow's public service, at which, to the great amusement of the neighbours, it is known they all purpose being present; and Smith inwardly wonders how all this domestic work is to be done

when she is daily, and for all day, employed elsewhere.

Precious is the Gospel to the poor! The wealthy who roll to church in their carriages may feel the blessedness of the privileges permitted them to enjoy, and dwell upon the glories of another state of being, and praise the mercy that holds forth to sinners of every degree the hope of pardon and acceptance in the Beloved, but it is to the poor, whose hearts the Lord has opened, that the name of Jesus sounds most sweet indeed. They can sympathize with the lowly maiden of Nazareth, the carpenter's betrothed, undergoing in the stable of an inn privations that they more than theoretically know. They can attach to the hungering, the thirst, the weariness, the houseless exposure of their incarnate Lord, a reality of suffering that their betters can but faintly picture to their own imaginations; and often do the untaught poor receive with such appropriating simplicity of entire belief, the promises at which the learned investigator staggers, that even to their own apprehension they are "rich in faith," while wanting, perhaps, a reasonable human prospect of tomorrow's meal.

We would fain hope that, while John Smith, earnestly bending forward, and Alice, supporting on her bosom the little creature who had fallen asleep, listen with trust and attention to the glad tidings preached by a faithful minister, they are so hungering and thirsting after righteousness as to ensure their being filled. The children, too, though surrounded by strange faces and strange sights, are collected, attentive, and still, as

if the eye of their own village teacher was upon them, to command or reprove. Few in that congregation are more poorly clad; few so clean, and so contented-looking. They do not, indeed, yet know the extent of the trials before them; but they have suffered enough to endear to them in no slight degree this privileged hour of prayer and praise and spiritual help, in the assembly of devout worshippers.

Returning, they find the young brasier loitering near the door, who wonders that they had patience to sit so long in a church, and still more that they could keep the children quiet; hinting that when once engaged in work during the week, they would find the Sunday too short for such a loss of time. Alice does not like this man, though a little further acquaintance with the class to which he belongs would convince her that he is one of the most civil and respectably-conducted among them; but his utter ignorance of, and consequent contempt for all domestic duties, comforts, and ties, makes her fear that he will be by no means a profitable companion for her husband. She has the satisfaction, however, of observing that Smith neither smiles at his jokes, nor appears to understand his hints; and the very scanty portion remaining of their store, together with the emptiness of their pockets, cannot but supply a subject of more present, pressing solicitude. She asks of this communicative neighbour whether she must wait till the week's end for the payment of her week's wages.

"To be sure you must; Saturday afternoon is pay-day. But if you are short of money, it's easy to get

an advance, as far as a matter of one or two pounds, from your employer."

"Indeed!" exclaims Smith, "that's good news certainly. How long will he give us to pay it back?"

"Why, you must make an agreement in this way. Your wife's wages come to nine shillings a week; you may borrow of the master a couple of pounds, for present use, and let him stop one shilling and sixpence a week out of the wages till it's all paid back. Only she must be bound to stay at the place till then."

"She needn't be bound. When I get work I can pay it out of my wages, and let her leave."

"That wouldn't do. You see the master has a sure hold of his money so long as the person owing it stays in his employ. He can't be equally sure of another man's servant; and if he lends you ready money he must choose his own conditions."

This is plain enough; but Smith secretly determines that he will not borrow more than is absolutely necessary for present demands, that his wife may the sooner find herself at liberty; and with this resolution he accompanies her in the morning to the place of her labour. His request is favourably listened to; but when he names a pound as the extent of his requirement, the foreman assures him that it is too little, and that it would not be worth the drawing up of a contract for such a trifle. He is persuaded to take two pounds; and in this form, supplied by an attorney, the agreement stands:—

"John Smith hereby agrees to hire his wife, Alice Smith, to, and to work solely for, ——, his executors,

administrators, and assigns, for the term of fifty-two weeks, at the trade of screw making; and the same ——, his executors, administrators, and assigns, shall be at liberty to retain out of the wages or earnings of the said Alice Smith the sum of one shilling and sixpence per week, till the sum of two pounds is fully paid, which is now due and owing from the said John Smith to the said ——. If the said John Smith shall borrow any more money of the said —— while the said Alice is fulfilling her number of weeks as a contract servant, she shall in no wise leave the service of the said ——, his executors, administrators, and assigns, so long as the said John Smith, or Alice his wife, is indebted to them," &c.

Smith would have cancelled the bargain, when he found that the engagement was for a whole year; but Alice has felt the powerful attraction of that glittering gold, containing, as it does, the value of so many comforts for her little almost naked family; and her anxiety to secure it, joined to the good-natured representations of the foreman, with some shame at appearing to trifle with the master himself, who is waiting, pen in hand, to sign it, have prevailed. They both affix their marks to the document, and, while Smith pockets the money, the other party deposits the contract in a safe place. To some persons it would have appeared strange that so much formal repetition, such careful and exact wording, should be held needful in almost forcing so small an advance of wages on a servant; but in all these things there is a method, and a very sufficient reason for each. The contract is a faithful copy of

one actually entered into under circumstances similar to those which we are now describing, save only that the man, and not his wife, was the person bound to labour.

The nod and smile with which husband and wife now part wear on both sides an assumed cheerfulness, for their hearts are heavy enough. Smith, however, congratulates himself that he has money in hand to lay out in preparing some comforts against her return; and she feels thankful to be so soon engaged at work, with no prospect of a speedy removal from her sphere of industry. What that is we must now attempt to describe.

The various processes through which a screw passes, from its original form as a plain bit of iron to perfect fitness for use, are carried on under that roof, respectively called forging, turning up, nicking, worming, and topping. All are not done in the same apartment, some requiring different machinery from the rest; and that in which Alice is stationed — the worming — has a great deal, connected by a multitude of straps. Her business is to apply each screw, already fashioned out, to a machine which, with a very rapid motion, cuts the worm round it. This requires great care, as nothing can stop the revolutions of the engine, and a slight degree even of tremor will bring the fingers into contact with the whirling steel, cutting, bruising, and perhaps crushing the hand. Alice has done much harder work, but nothing half so difficult; and the rudeness of her next neighbour, who calls her a stupid fool when a slight exclamation announces that she is hurt, tends to in-

crease her nervousness. She, however, knows that practice will familiarize her with the method of working, and resolves to expect no sympathy from her companions.

Dinner hour arrives, and the machinery stops; many of the labourers hurry home to their meal, but others, having brought some provision, or receiving it from friends who leave it for them, sit down in groups to eat it, in an open part of the room. Alice had felt the unpleasantness of her situation far less while employed at her machine than now; she had brought her bread and cheese with her, and finds herself surrounded by a crowd of strangers, whose looks, language, and apparel, are almost equally offensive to the modest and cleanly village matron. Some there are who seat themselves apart, and in melancholy silence eat what they have; and a few look as though, like herself, they would gladly have closed their ears to much of what was going on around them; but these are exceptions, and the general fact is too plain, that of the moral sense very little can exist there. Self-respect appears indeed incompatible with so much habitual uncleanliness of person and looseness of discourse; and Alice feels that her sex is cruelly wronged by being placed in a situation so fraught with evils, and even compelled to occupy it by the refusal of the masters to employ those who are by nature far better fitted for such employment. She sees several infants brought in by idle-looking, half-starved, or half-drunken men, and by children much too young for such a charge, to be nourished at the breast during this short cessation of labour. The

wretched appearance of these babes wrings her heart; squalid, filthy, pallid, emaciated, and with a general aspect of unnatural stupor for which she knows not how to account, until a woman near her, being unable to rouse her infant from its lethargic state, angrily exclaims to the dirty girl who brought it in, "You've been at the Godfrey, dosing him to death."

"No, I hav'n't," surlily answers the girl.

"Yes, you has," responds another; "for you wanted me to give a big spoonful to little Dickey too, that we might have a good play, and called me names, for saying, I wouldn't kill him like the last." A clamorous discussion on all sides now follows, while from the various opinions expressed, the criminations and recriminations bandied about, Alice discovers that it is the universal practice to quiet these poor neglected babes during the long hours, or rather days, of their mothers' absence, by dosing them with a mixture, of the nature of which she is ignorant, but its effects she clearly comprehends to be very deadly. Some of the women extol its value, and maintain that it is perfectly harmless; while others, admitting that it cannot be dispensed with, adduce fearful instances of its fatal operation when long persisted in. One wild-looking female labourer holds up a shrivelled, long-limbed little creature, the broad, fixed, unmeaning stare of whose eyes is like that of a corpse, and says, "See, here's the blessing of Godfrey. This is the third that's gone the same way. O, you're a plump little soul, and a merry one, aint ye?" and she began roughly to dance it. The poor babe uttered a faint cry of pain and distress,

on which she folds it to her bosom, kissing its clammy little hands, and moaning over it some words not intelligible.

"It's better luck for you and them too," observes another woman, "that they should die off."

"Did I ever say it wasn't?"

Alice, unable to bear such a scene, now bursts into tears.

"Poor fool! you are new to it; but it will soon come natural enough to you."

"Never!" exclaims Alice. "I've borne six children, and one of them is in heaven, and I gave it back to God, because he lent it, and had a right to take it again: but I loved it as my life, and so I do every one of the five that's left; and I would work the flesh off my bones to keep them all in life and health and comfort. But I could not bear the thought of wishing one of them dead."

"Have you got a husband?"

"Yes, and a kind one as ever woman had."

"Is he in work?"

"He's trying might and main to find some, and willing to put his hand to whatever turns up. Can you tell me of anything to be had in the way of work for a stout, healthy man?"

"There's plenty belonging to us, that would get the first of it if it were to be had; but you will see, he'll soon be as fond of doing nothing, as lazy and as drunken as the brute that's coming to fetch her baby,"—pointing to the mother of the little spectre; "and you

may work the flesh off your bones fast enough without earning more than he'll spend in gin."

The healthy glow on Alice's cheek deepens to crimson, as she replies, "You speak unjustly, neighbour, of one you don't know."

Before anything more could pass, the bell had rung; each infant was hastily borne away by its nurse, and Alice shrunk from the savage, bloated aspect of the man who mechanically takes the shrinking child from its mother, whose half-averted glance of disgust as she yields it to him, in some measure accounts for her readiness to see her little ones in their coffins. Other men, she also observes, who have brought hot food or babes to their wives, whose looks bespeak more of helplessness and stupidity than poverty; with one whose whole appearance is that of patient, uncomplaining endurance, while he receives what are evidently the commands of a perfect virago, red-faced, and with every symptom of intemperance upon her. In vain does she look around for some instance of that attachment between wife and husband, mother and child, which has ever sweetened her cup of poverty. All seems so unlike what she has been accustomed to, that it resembles a disagreeable dream. Unspeakably does her heart yearn towards her own poor home of peace and love, towards her kind husband, her one blooming boy, and four lively girls. Thoughts of what may be, when another is added to the party under existing circumstances, do indeed intrude; but she strives to banish them, and to shut her ears against the discourse

carried on by two females at her side, in the hearing of a male workman.

Before accompanying Alice back to her home, we will explain some of the disputed virtues of Godfrey's cordial; and in so doing, to avoid any possible suspicion of misrepresenting the matter, we will quote, verbatim, the evidence collected on this subject by a commissioner who explored the abodes of misery, deprived of their proper domestic superintendent, and who traced to its root this enormous evil in a manufacturing town.

"*Godfrey's Cordial* is a mixture of boiled treacle and water, with the addition of a certain portion of opium. Mothers purchase it for the purpose of keeping their children quiet, or of 'sleeping them,' during the time the mother goes out to work. Many children are killed by it; some waste away to skeletons, and their sufferings are prolonged; others die more easily. Every chemist and druggist here makes his own *Godfrey*. It is left to the apprentice to concoct, or to the chemist's wife. It stands in a great jug on the counter for sale. They are all obliged to keep this medicine, or they would lose their custom.

"Not one of them probably could reply to the question of what quantity of opium there was in a quart of his *Godfrey*. He does not know, because his apprentice or his wife made it; his apprentice or his wife *cannot* know, because they made no estimate of how much evaporation of the boiling treacle and water took place, either before or after they put in the opium. Thus, if a certain quantity of opium was ordered by the chemist to a gallon of water and two pounds of

treacle, the water and treacle might have evaporated to three pints, and one and a half pounds, while the quantity of opium remained nearly the same, (perhaps quite the same, if only just dropped in,) as though no such diminution of the diluting portion by evaporation had taken place. Therefore, two or three teaspoonfuls of this cordial, given to an infant, would be stronger of poison *than any body knew.*

"Since infants are continually left in charge of children of eight or nine years old during the whole day, it is not too much to suppose that in many cases this child knows where to find the *Godfrey.* I have been told so by children."

This may throw light on the appalling fact, that in some of the great manufacturing towns one half of all the children born among the working population, die in their first year.

CHAPTER IX.

DOMESTIC CHANGES.

ACCOMPANYING Alice Smith to her home, we shall find a joyous welcome prepared, and wonderful changes apparent. Several articles of furniture, such as before they dared not have dreamed of possessing, together with a good hot supper, and the still mirthful, innocent, laughing faces of her children, make Alice resolve to forget how deeply her husband must have dipped into the loan; and when she has heard that he had only laid out twenty shillings, she commends his frugality; at the same time gently hinting that they must consider the most necessary things first, and save a little for any sudden call. The many inquiries put to her concerning her day's work she answers cautiously, suppressing whatever might give pain; and though not a little tired, she remains up an hour beyond her usual time to put her household in due order for the morrow. She must be at her post by seven o'clock, and twelve hours' absence from her little flock is more than she can reconcile herself to; but that trade is very brisk now, a large order for screws has been received from the railway, and no time must be lost.

Saturday arrives, and Richards, the young brasier, has convinced Smith that he ought himself to receive his wife's wages, instead of allowing her to mix with a parcel of rude people at the public house where all are paid. Alice is glad of the arrangement, not only on this account, but because it affords her a little more time to clean up for Sunday. By working every night herself, and fixing for Polly, she has kept the mending pretty well done; and on Friday evening she had, much against her will, washed out the linen, filling the little room with damp and discomfort while drying it; an annoyance so new to Smith, that he could not help grumbling a little, and declaring she must in future put it out to a neighbour to wash, or he should be obliged to leave home till it was over. Alice sees with secret anguish that six days' absence from her home has sufficed to unsettle all within it; that her husband has become fretful and restless, her children wayward and unruly, inclined to quarrel with each other, and to form intimacies with some of the little neighbours, whose appearance and manners had so greatly repelled them at first; while her word, once all-potent in influencing them, has lost much of its authority. Little Jenny, in her broken language, talks of naughty mammy going out, and of being pinched and slapped; and, worst of all, she overhears an oath whispered by Jack, her only boy, seven years old, in an angry tone to his eldest sister, who retaliates by a most coarse epithet of abuse. Alice hopes that the long afternoon of Saturday, and the whole of Sunday, may suffice to bring things back into their original good order; but, instead

of the hearty co-operation that she looked for from her husband, she finds him evidently indifferent to what is going wrong, and seemingly under a degree of excitement, the origin of which is but too apparent when he lays down her week's wages, two-and-sixpence short, observing,

"There's eighteenpence stopped by the master, and a shilling I was forced to lay out at the public."

"How do you mean, John?"

"Why, it seems every man as he gets his wages is expected to lay out a shilling in drink, at the tap where they wait for the money. 'Tis all of a piece with the rest of the robbery plan; but a man can't help himself—he must do like the rest."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Alice. "Hadn't I better go myself another day. They can hardly have the face to ask it from a woman."

"No! I saw women tippling as hearty as the best of 'em; and I'd sooner not have my wife get into such ways."

"You needn't fear it, John. Nothing would bring me to drink."

"Meaning it's easy to bring me to it. I'm much obliged to you."

"I mean no such thing," says poor Alice, with tears starting to her eyes; but she sees it more prudent to say nothing farther at present, and with a heavy heart, but nimble hand, proceeds with her household labour.

She has some difficulty in prevailing to bring all her straggling flock to attend public worship on the Sunday morning; and Smith declares that in future he

shall only go to the afternoon prayers, seeing no reason why they should knock themselves up so early in the day, when all their neighbours were resting themselves, or lounging about half-clad.

Another Saturday, and things are going on much worse. Alice feels it hard that, as the whole family subsist by her labour, no one should be willing to make the slightest sacrifice to her comfort, or show any inclination to assist her efforts at preserving order and decency at home. Poor Smith is by no means unkind, but listless and dull: sometimes complaining of the torment the children are to him, but again correcting himself by observing that if it wasn't for her industry, they might all starve together. Cursing the covetousness of the employers, which made them reject the services of men; and at the same time remarking, that if he did get work nobody knew what would become of the children when left to themselves. It is plain that he makes no effort to find employ; for idle habits have taken a hold, and he cannot shake them off. Meanwhile the loan has been slipping away; the reduction of half a crown from her wages is more than Alice can afford to lose; and while her body is sorely fatigued, and her spirits depressed through the persevering monotony of her employment, she feels the spring of mind that had distinguished her giving way, and discouragement, almost amounting to despair, succeeding every new survey that she takes of their situation.

One evening, Smith being absent, Richards comes in, and after a few common remarks, thus proceeds: "You are such a different person from our women here,

that I feel for you more than for any of them; and though I've helped many a fellow to spend his money over at the Checquers, yet I'd rather keep Smith out of it, for your sake."

"Thank you kindly; but he isn't often there."

"Not there, but elsewhere, where the liquor is as strong. I can't think, with your family, and keeping them so decent, you can afford it, out of your wages; and I want to advise you to try two things; one or both, if you won't be affronted. You had best, without delay, put two of the biggest children to work; and you had best speak to your master about tommy. It will save your husband some temptation."

Our readers may wish to know what tommy may signify: it is the familiar name for a plan of payment adopted by some employers in almost all branches, and by too many forced on their work-people, called by them the truck system. The proprietor of an establishment, whether manufactory, mine, or whatever it may be, enters into a contract with a shopkeeper to supply his work-people with articles for daily consumption on his order: or else, at his own cost he opens such warehouse, employing an agent to superintend it. On the Saturday night, instead of money, the workman receives an order to the amount of his wages, and takes it to the tommy-shop, selecting goods, at whatever price, of course, the seller may choose to set on them, and of whatever quality he may choose to supply. The profit to the proprietor is enormous; for, if he contracts with a tradesman, the latter pays him ten or twenty per cent. for the preference, and moreover, gives the

usual credit; and if he opens a tommy-shop on his own account, the advantages are still greater, more exclusively his. As thus: we will suppose with the commissioner already quoted, that "a master purchases 1,000*l.* worth of goods for his tommy-shop on the usual credit of six months, and his wages for his six months are 1,000*l.* He is enabled to get all the profit on the 1,000*l.* worth of goods sold at his own price, besides saving (i. e. getting) the interest on the 1,000*l.* for six months; and all this without advancing one farthing for cash. Furthermore, in his payment of the 1,000*l.* for the goods, he not only has the six months' credit, but probably pays for them by a three or four months' bill. A tommy-shop is a monopoly of the most perfect kind in all its ramifications. Once established, it is always 'a fortune,' in itself. Of course, all these fortunes come out of the working man's pocket."

When it is recollected at what interest a man may put out 2,000*l.* of ready money for a year, and also what actual profit is made by wholesale purchasing and retail selling, particularly where the poor buyer must perforce take the goods tendered, and at the price named by the seller, it ceases to be a matter of wonder that the stringent provisions of an act passed a few years since against the truck system should be, as they are, all but universally evaded; and that it should continue in active operation; and that where masters are not both wise and benevolent, their hold upon the work-people, particularly by means of the loan system, is liable to be abused, as Mr. Horne expresses it, "in all the intricate ways of tommy."

Alice Smith, careful and far-sighted, had made herself acquainted both with the advantages and disadvantages of this plan, and now she feels disposed to venture upon it. The sudden loneliness of spirit and feeling into which she is cast by this unnatural breaking up of her domestic ties, her comparative ignorance as to how either her husband or children spend their time, the gradual, but very sensible diminution of her personal influence over them, and dread that her husband may become an habitual spendthrift in so profligate a place as she well knows it to be, — all these considerations weigh with her to adopt the advice of Richards, really given through a kindness of feeling excited by her devotedness to her family, which, in all its bearings, he never had seen anything to resemble. She thanks him, and accepts his offer to assist in persuading Smith into the same view, if she finds any difficulty in so doing.

There was a time when Alice Smith would have laughed at the idea of calling in additional influence to guide her honest partner into any course that she deemed best for his family; but that was a time when she filled her proper sphere, as the manager of his household affairs, the watchful nurse of his children, the presiding genius of his poor but peaceful home. She is now exhausting her little remaining strength in a daily routine of toil, alike disgusting and degrading in her sight, among companions whose very talk is contamination. It is a long while since she breathed pure air, or looked on a green meadow, or engaged in any of the out-door occupations of her former life. Some-

times, with sickly longings, she would pine for hours over the imaginary scene of rustic toil, and put from her the scanty morsel that her unconscious tears had moistened: but this was only when bodily ailments, inseparable from her state of health, overpowered the calm resignation of her mind; and now she looks forward, with dread and dismay, to speedily adding a yet more helpless inmate to their disordered, disunited household.

Among her fellow-labourers there is one, and only one, who appears heartily to sympathize in her peculiar trials. This is a woman somewhat advanced in life, a solitary being, with no person belonging to her, who brings her daily meal, and eats it in a corner alone, unless Alice contrives to get near her. She is called Nell Carter, and her name is all that any one seems to know about her. Tall, bony, somewhat masculine, she commands a sort of respect by the free, forcible way in which she rebukes any impropriety of language, whether profane or indelicate, addressed to herself; while seemingly unconscious of whatsoever else passes about her. Alice took a dislike to this person at first; but hearing her reprove, in the language of Scripture, and with most unflinching boldness, some ribaldry from an over-looker whom very few dared venture to offend, she began to observe her with more complacent feelings, and has often found cause to rejoice in having obtained her good-will; for, beneath that rude exterior, dwells the utmost tenderness of heart, and this isolated being has sympathy for all who suffer. Their employments, however, are different; their sta-

tions distant; and it is only during meals they can converse.

On the morning after the conversation with Richards, Alice repairs to the work-shop, her eyes swollen with weeping, and her heart wrung with anguish. Her husband has reproached, has almost reviled her; and violently forbidden any attempt to alter the present mode of receiving payment. He has accused her of wishing to spend on herself what is rightfully his; for Smith has already imbibed some of the false maxims of those with whom idleness led him to associate; and he has allowed poor Alice to see that he regards the coming increase of family as a threefold misfortune — as an additional mouth to feed — an unavoidable interruption of some weeks to her regular toil — and an obstacle in the way of his project for setting the two elder girls to work also. Once or twice, in former days, John Smith had given way to momentary irritation, and used harsh language; but then the children clung about both parents, and by their cries and caresses soon softened and shamed him. Now, alas! they stood aloof, indifferent alike to the mother's tears and the father's oaths and stormy language. This has wounded the loving spirit of Alice almost beyond endurance; and her looks of speechless sorrow are marked by all in the room, eliciting kind words from more than a few; but mixed with significant assurance that she would get so used to all sorts of trouble as not to care for anything.

When the dinner hour arrives, Nell Carter, instead of betaking herself to her own corner, follows Alice to

that, still more secluded, which she had chosen, and seating herself, begins, in a tone of peculiar gentleness: "Well, neighbour, it is not my business, nor my way, to pry into anybody's private troubles, but if I can speak a word to comfort you, I shall be glad. I fear you are feeling the thorns that lie thicker and sharper as we poor folks go on our road; and we seem all too busy picking our own way in it to help a struggling friend. I wish I could help you."

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. Carter, but you can't; I'm not very well, and I'm somewhat anxious, as you may suppose; and—and my spirits fail me." Again will the tears burst forth.

"Poor thing! I partly know what troubles you, but you must bear up, for more sakes than one. I am a lone woman, and glad to be lone, since they whose sufferings were the worst thing I had to suffer are at rest and peace. I've watched you ever since you came here, and learnt something of your family, and I've long feared to see your patient looks alter to this fashion. But, now, before you give away to fretting, let me tell you a little of what I have seen in this very place, where I've worked twelve years; and the feeling that others are so much worse off, will, mayhap, cheer you up."

Alice secretly thinks that the sorrows of others may increase but cannot lessen her own; however, she will not check the unusual communicativeness of her kind-hearted friend.

"You see that girl with red hair, the most foul-tongued young slut that ever used bad words; well,

she is one of nine children, all living in this place, and I think not one of them knows who made 'em, they're so ignorant. Their mother was a tidy girl, married very young to a miner; and he had hardly got her into his power when he took her down to the coal-pits to hurry for him. You don't know what that is? 'Tis the drawing of a wooden carriage, heavy-loaded with coals, along the seams of a mine, where a body couldn't stand half upright, where all is as dark as midnight except the candle stuck in the miner's cap; and where she had to slave like a brute beast, in nothing but her body-linen, with a coarse pair of trowsers, a thick leathern belt round her waist, a heavy iron chain fastened to it, passing between her legs and hooked on to the carriage, and she dragging it, almost on all-fours, through these passages, ten, twelve, fourteen, or sixteen hours—I was going to say, every day—but there was no day for her. It was dark night always in that frightful mine; and dark night above ground before she could leave it."

"How very dreadful!"

"She toiled so for a few months with her own husband to drive her on in the work; but he found her earnings would keep him idle half the week, and so he left her there, poor young thing! among such a set that the worst you ever saw here are angels to them. She worked till the morning of the day her first child was born—a lovely boy—and had to go down again in less than a fortnight, to the same life. Till then, she had kept herself different from the rest; but it seemed the parting her from the baby made her des-

perate. I was told her wild laugh would ring again through the long black galleries, and her jests keep them all merry; but her heart was breaking as fast as it could then, and it had broke—but we are blind creatures, and can't tell what is best. It was a great lord owned all those mines; his agent gave good wages, and got the worth of them out of the miners too. Penrose, seeing the value his wife's toil, was off, took some pains to keep her from sinking; and she came round a little, especially when he gave her a holiday now and then to nurse her boy. She had that girl yonder for her next; and by the time the third was born, I think she'd as little of human nature left about her as could well be found even in a coal-pit. My heart has ached to see her, all black and filthy, with a pipe in her mouth, swaggering or standing about, swearing and talking as nobody in a Christian land should be let talk. And it was with her own consent that at four years old her little boy was carried down to *his* work in the pit."

She pauses, for all the colour has left Alice Smith's face; then hastily resumes.

"Don't suppose they set the baby to hurry: no, he was only a trapper, sitting behind a door, to pull it open with a string when any of the cobs came up. But it was all in darkness, cold, and silence; and the child dared not sleep through the long, long black hours; and he said, poor little thing!—but no matter for that: we will talk of the mother. Ah, you begin to feel in your heart now, that your lot isn't so bad as it might be! I see that. The poor woman bore ten or eleven

children; nine lived, which was a wonder in all the place. She died at last, by an awful death. One of her own children was winding at the pit's mouth, and by carelessness natural in a child, overwound the rope; the bucket was drawn over the roller, and down, down she went, how many hundred feet I can't say; but there was no life in the mangled body."

Alice, unable to speak, can only point inquiringly to the girl, whose violent laughter at this moment frightfully contrasts with the tale she is listening to.

"No, it wasn't her; it was a younger. I can't follow out the family history; but Richards can tell you just where each one of them is now to be found. The father is alive, and lives in clover on their wages; not but that they manage to spend a pretty deal in debauchery themselves. That girl Mary is seventeen, and the three next her are as bad as herself. As I told you, they don't know who made them; they never used His great name but to swear wicked oaths. The eldest is the biggest ruffian: he was kept a trapper till old enough to be bound 'prentice, and a dreadful savage it was that his father bound him to. The boy was hardly to be seen without a scar; often badly cut; and once, I remember, his arm was clean broke by the blow he got. He bore it, poor creature, as bear it he must, till last year, when his time was out; and then, in spite of his father, he left the pit, and is now at Mr. —'s iron-works, revenging upon everybody that comes within his power, the wrongs he has suffered ever since he was born."

"He has been sorely wronged, indeed, neighbour."

"That he has: his mother had to leave him before he was three weeks old, and nobody can tell what a forsaken baby suffers in strange hands. Then, just as he grew big enough to play about in freedom, and to get a little learning, to teach him his duty to God and man, the helpless thing was carried down, in his little nightgown, to the dark and dreary pit, which he never left, except just at night, and on Sundays, not always then, for fifteen years. But this is only one out of hundreds such cases. What else can come of taking women from their homes, and working them like beasts, till they become not so much beasts as devils?"

"The poor brutes have a deal of love for their young," observes Alice.

"So have the poor women, even in the mines, but it only adds to their sorrow. Did you ever take notice of a woman named Cook in the next room, working at the nicking? You often pass her."

"Yes; but I don't fancy her looks. She seems to me dark and discontented."

"Well she may! she comes three miles every morning, and goes the same at night. She has four or five little children, and one an infant of three months, that never gets suck but before she leaves, and after she goes back. She suffers a great deal of pain, as you may suppose; and she told me not long ago that the little ones hanging about her, and crying to her not to leave them, almost kills her."

"Poor creature! I little thought what made her so melancholy. Why doesn't she come and live nearer?"

"She cannot; her little place was taken for a term

of years, when matters were not so bad with her; and she can't get it off her hands. A tumble-down thing it is, and the landlord couldn't let it again. After her hard day's work, six miles' walking, and all her children's wants to attend to, she often is up more than half the night, trying to patch up the crazy hut, and keep out wind and rain. But there's the bell: I have told you a few things, to show you how much better off we are than many about us."

Alice feels the kind intention with which all has been said, and secretly confesses that her lot is more than tolerable compared with those of whom she has heard; but wounded affection is grievous; a heart so pierced knows its own bitterness, and inwardly thinks that any other trial would be preferable. Her homeward walk is for once too short, so much does she dread the recurrence of the morning's scene; but she is agreeably disappointed on finding an appearance of neatness and comfort, as though her return had been prepared for as at first it was; while her husband, with some awkwardness but more kindness, asks her how she feels after her walk; and in a tone of rebuke orders the children to go and kiss their mother.

Poor Alice, full of joy and thankfulness at so unexpected a change, cuts short the apology that Smith soon begins to offer for his past unkindness; assuring him that one word of good-will from him more than repays any trouble she may have felt at seeing him so displeased; and after commending her good temper, he proceeds, whiffing away all the time at the pipe which has become his inseparable companion: "You see, Al-

ly, it would make a great difference to me doing what you spoke of. I shouldn't have a halfpenny to spend, nor the least comfort to myself; so you can't wonder that I foamed a bit; but after thinking it all over, I believe we must make up our minds to do it — there's no help."

"I had quite given it up, John, since you seemed so bent against it."

"Ay, but I see it now. We can't help ourselves; having done one foolish thing, we must take the consequences, bad as they are."

"What a foolish thing, dear?"

"Like our neighbours, Ally, we were in too great a hurry to get married."

"John, John! what *have* I done to make you repent marrying me?" and the fond wife's heart swells as if it would burst.

"I don't repent marrying *you*, Ally, more than another; but you see, the root of all our troubles in this life is having a family; if it was not for that we might jog on well enough. Suppose there was no children, couldn't I John Smith, have supported myself and laid by a pretty penny in the savings' bank? and could n't you Alice Moore, have remained at service, putting up your wages, till we had such a sum between us, that we might, by about this time, have begun to think of marrying, and setting up in the world quite respectable? Then, too, we should have had, at any rate, six or seven children less than the share we are likely to have now; and every hungry

mouth taken away is a great saving, you know, Ally, and leaves one so much the more to live upon and—"

But his wise speech is cut short by an abrupt hysteric laugh from his poor wife, who remarks, "You didn't think of that, by way of comfort, when the coffin-lid was nailed down over your own Charley. Oh, you'd have worked yourself to the bare bone, and glad to earn a morsel, if he had but opened his pretty, pretty mouth to swallow it, and his blue, laughing eyes to look upon his daddy; you didn't grudge your children's food then; oh, no, you didn't!"

"Alice, hold your tongue. It makes my hair stand on end to hear you talk and laugh in that way."

But the overwrought feelings of the wife and mother cannot be subdued so easily. She resumes: "You worked many a day, early and late, to feed us all; and now I'm doing my best, or if not, I will. I'll take in any business to employ me all night, after worming the screws all day; only don't you reproach me for being your wife, nor talk as if you wished your children dead."

Smith's natural affection has not been yet sufficiently schooled down by the impious jargon of some dabblers in political economy, who had been haranguing the poor fellows assembled in a tap-room on the evils of matrimony and paternity, which they represented as the root of all suffering among the lower classes. Richards, being a young disciple of this sect, took no small credit to himself for breaking off marriage with an industrious girl; and no marvel that Smith's weak

mind has become infected by their specious folly and wickedness. His wife's passionate language and manner, and above all, her allusion to their first boy, whose death nearly broke his father's heart, so fondly did he dote on him, have arrested for the present the progress of his new convictions; and he endeavours to excuse himself, at the same time returning to the subject of the tommy-shop. He remarks, that they cannot do without a little money in hand, and that a farther loan should be demanded of her employer, preparatory to this new mode of receiving wages. To everything Alice gives assent, as though careless of all that concerns herself: she is lost in thought, ill in body and in mind, and for once neglects all her household arrangements, sitting with her face buried in her hands, and wishing in her heart that she had died ere such language as she has this day heard had fallen upon her ear from the lips of a husband so dear to her. But this abominable doctrine, called the theory of population, is one of the multiplied wrongs of modern date; a device by which the wealthy would shift off the guilt of oppressing the poor from their own shoulders, and cast the reproach upon the Most High.

CHAPTER X.

INCREASING TROUBLES.

TIME passes on: Alice Smith is at her work as usual, but her debt is increased to seven pounds, and her bond of service extended accordingly. She has also a baby at home, a boy, whom she left at the month's end stout, strong, and full of spirits. That would have been a happy month for her, had not the growing distaste of her husband for his home, and his evident fondness for the tap-room, presented a sad contrast to former times. Over the children she regained some influence, and had led them back into better habits; but the idea of leaving the infant in such hands was very trying. However, Smith appeared so much hurt at the thought of her supposing he would allow it to be neglected that she could not refuse to trust him; and now it is daily brought at the dinner hour to receive nourishment. Yet, in spite of all the care that seems bestowed upon it, the babe alters much. He becomes thin, fretful, and drowsy. In vain does Alice cross question all her family, and the neighbours also: no ground appears for supposing that anything is

given to it without her knowledge; but Nell Carter suggests that the difference of air and employment, with her unavoidable anxiety about the child, may have affected the nutriment on which it subsists; adding, that in almost every case the doctors have pronounced this to be one cause of the mortality among infants.

"You see, neighbour," she continues, "a baby, if it be well, is a playful, happy little thing, only wanting to be dandled about while awake, fed when 'tis hungry, and let it sleep as much as it likes. But if the milk disagrees, the poor thing's stomach gets bad, and then nothing pleases it. Dancing it about makes it sick and dizzy; keeping it still does not agree with its restlessness; when it wants to sleep, pain keeps it awake; and when it awakes, all sorts of miserable feelings come over it. The child has no way of complaining but by cries and screams: this is sometimes hard for a mother to bear; and who besides a mother will bear it always? Nothing but the Godfrey will do."

"And would you give it to a child of your own?"

"No, nor to any other person's child; for I'd pass all the day, and all the night too, if needful, in soothing a poor little baby's sufferings; but what I would do is no rule for other people. I'm a lone woman, and in many other things as lone as in my situation; so I don't speak my own notions and ways, but those of the people about me."

"I only wish," says Alice, "you'd leave this business, and set up to take care of the infants of poor women like me. You might get on well enough; and

many a mother would go to work with a lighter heart to think her little one was in such hands."

"'Tis odd you should talk of such a thing, when I set my heart upon it right often myself; — don't look so eager, for I can't do it."

"Why not? Think of the poor little babies."

"Neighbour, 'tis useless my thinking anything about it. I am not over-fond of talking of my own affairs; but you are different from many, and I'll just tell you this much. I had them belonging to me that got into sore troubles, and nothing under a matter of thirty pound would save them from a worse fate than you'd like to hear of. I had only one way of raising it honestly; and I did so. Our employer holds in his hands a contract that will keep me working here for at least three years to come."

Alice deeply feels that her own position is more similar to this than her companion is aware of: however, in one point they greatly differ, and she remarks, "You are, as you say, a lone woman, and you don't seem to go to much expense upon yourself; your wages are good; and a pretty piece of the debt must be paid off before now: I think you might manage, by great saving, to pay up the remainder in a shorter time than three years, at any rate."

"Ay, I could; but the bargain which was made three years ago, was to stop two shillings a week only; for when it was made I had calls upon me which led me to agree to that. The terms suit our master: he finds me a steady hand, regular at my work, and well acquainted with it. If I offered him ten pounds in, to

let me put up the arrear and be free, he would not consent; for the sum of money is nothing to him, but an experienced, regular worker is a great deal. It has been tried, I can tell you, by one that wanted my services elsewhere."

"It's a cruel thing, and an unjust, wrongful oppression."

"It is law, for all that. If our master was to die to-morrow, or to sell the business, whoever got it would have a right to keep me at work in the same way. The lawyer put in the words, 'heirs, executors, and assignees,' and that makes me a part of the stock in trade."

"And me too," is Alice Smith's thoughts, though she says nothing.

"However," continues the other, "I would not have you think I am laying by money while so many want. There were other debts, that, to be sure, I was not liable for; but in right and justice I felt they should be paid by me, or else they would never be paid at all; so I undertook them, and the money I can spare goes that way till they are paid. And now let's talk no more about it."

Alice returns to her work, pondering over the hard fate of this woman, who is evidently respectable, far above the persons who surround her. But the mother's thoughts soon revert to her baby, and she frets over the conviction that its health is being tampered with; writhing under anxieties that only mothers know. To this is added a new cause of annoyance: the man whose business it is to set the various tools used by the work-people, has lately addressed her in language exceed-

ingly revolting to her feelings as a modest woman, and a virtuous wife. She had resented this with spirit; and when compelled to go to him, always assumes a look sufficiently expressive of her determination to repel any familiarity; but these men exercise a power over the poor female, the extent of which she soon experiences. Finding her unassailable by his coarse language and liberties, he pretends, whenever she comes for the help that is absolutely necessary for the prosecution of her task, to be too busy to attend to her; and thus she is kept waiting, not only to have her ears wounded by his disgusting discourse with others less scrupulous than herself, but also to the great hinderance of her day's work; so that she is made to appear deficient in industry, and receives severe reprimands for her indolence. On telling the foreman of her annoyance, as at last she is compelled to do, in her own vindication, he roughly replies that there is a fine for swearing and bad language; and if she chooses to inform against any one he will be punished.

But all around her assure her that by so doing she will only bring increased suffering on herself. The rule is so generally disregarded, that any person appearing as an informer would have the whole establishment against them; and in this instance the offender is a favoured servant, a man whom they would not lose, and against his revenge no protection would be available. Thus hemmed in, Alice can but submit to his spiteful method of making her lose time; until the master himself calls her husband in, when taking the baby to her, and informs him that unless he induces his

wife to return to her former industrious habits, some means must be found to compel the fulfilment of the contract on her part. "You have borrowed money from me, on the strength of your wife's ability and willingness to work it out; and now I am defrauded of fair payment by the lazy habits that she is indulging. Remember, it is only by favour you are allowed to bring the child to her: if she does not try to deserve such kindness, it will be forbidden."

The scene that passes that night in the comfortless home of this poor couple we will not detail. Alice resolves to bear anything rather than rouse her husband to the revenge that she is certain he will take on the culprit, if she relates the origin of this complaint; but the prospect of losing the sight of her poor, pining baby is so dreadful as almost to unsettle her mind. She listens to her husband's querulous, grumbling complaints, embittered by allusions to the folly of early marriage, and the respectable comfort in which an industrious bachelor might live, and summed up by lamentations on the obvious necessity of sending out the children to work for what their mother is not inclined to supply; she has rocked her little one to rest on her bosom, and retains her own composure in order to avoid startling it by any such burst of feeling as threatens to convulse her worn-out frame. Meanwhile, a quarrel is rising among the children, and soon breaks out into noisy scuffling, to silence which the father rises, and bestows a number of indiscriminate kicks and blows, which, of course, elicit as many screams and yells. John Smith was never known to strike a child;

and this sad change pierces the heart of his wife yet more deeply. She ventures to remonstrate, and is answered by a fierce demand, whether she thinks he is to be her puppet, and do nothing but what she chooses, while her laziness and dishonesty are likely to bring him to jail? The tattered hat is then snatched up; some silver is taken from the diminished store, and he sallies forth, to return in the dead of night, drunk and savage.

Under this aggravated trial, Alice applies the next day to her friend Nell Carter for counsel. She is compelled to acknowledge the change wrought in her once loving husband, and the misery of her present lot. The good woman sympathizes with her, but can do no more. "There is only one way of escaping this persecution, neighbour, and that I feel sure you won't take. If you did, you would lose a comfort, the value of which you can hardly know — that of a good conscience. Do your best to make up for the time you are wronged of: and if the threat is executed of keeping away the child, I'll go with you myself to the master, and bear witness to the way you are treated in. But this is the last step to take, and to be avoided as long as we can.

Alice works harder; but her unsteady hand occasions more failures, and compels a more frequent recourse to the malicious smith. At length, the baby being taken away, she makes up her mind to go alone to the employer, and does obtain an interview after very great obstacles had been surmounted. She tells her story with all the pathos of true sorrow, and all

the eloquence of truth: after hearing it, the employer observes it is very strange, that she should be the first, in so large an establishment, to make such a complaint; and that, as it would be a bad precedent to encourage discontented people to bring their stories to him, he can do nothing. She must go to the foreman in the regular way.

Alice wants to explain that the foreman is far from being just to her; but she is told, with a raised voice, that her business is in the workshop; and that she is not again to take the liberty of coming to the head of the firm, but to conform to the general rules, and mind her own affairs. She goes back, well nigh broken-hearted, and soon finds that her unsuccessful attempt is known among the people, who take care to make her feel the estimation in which they hold an informer.

Night after night she returns to find her baby sinking more rapidly each time; its breath gives evidence of the presence of something that ought not to have entered its little stomach; and she hears, with silent lip and tearless eye, the calculations of the neighbours as to how long it may hold out. It is the only creature belonging to her who has not wilfully given her pain; and her neglected affections seem to twine about it as though to lose it must rend her every remaining tie. All the children have become sickly; the articles that she gets at the tommy-shop are the very refuse of their kind; indeed, they seem to be manufactured solely for the wretched beings who must take them or starve. In the open market competition produces a lowering of prices, and a man who furnishes tolerable goods cheap

will have customers; but here is no competition; no choice for the miserable purchaser. The master's order simply says, "Please to let Alice Smith have five shillings;" and what the vender chooses to value at five shillings is given to her. The loss is so great every way, that she would sorely lament having ever adopted the plan, did not the consciousness of having thereby, so far as she was concerned, removed from her husband every inducement to drink, afford her some consolation. But this was gradually losing its power; for the want of feeling manifested towards the dying infant touched her far more nearly than what had only wounded herself. She is sure that ordinary care would have saved it; and now, while she sits, in gloomy solitude, beside the coarse little coffin that contains its skeleton remains, a dark cloud settles upon the once bright and happy spirit of Alice Smith; her purest affections are blighted through no fault of hers; and, as candour forces her to acknowledge, less by any intentional fault of her husband's than by the unnatural cruelty that denied him the privilege of honestly labouring for the support of his family, and thus cast him, ignorant and idle, on such courses as the ignorant and idle will follow, as their only means of gratification.

In a work recently published, "The Perils of the Nation," the following fact is vouched for. "A man of business was lately heard to say, concerning some large additions to his premises, fitted for the reception of several hundred work people, that he wished to see none but women employed there. On being asked the

reason, he replied, 'It is this: men will tire and flag; but set a woman to labour who has a husband and children at home depending on her earnings, and she will work herself to death for their sakes. A little extra pay will keep her at it all night, as well as all day; there are no labourers like those women.' "

Of course the more extensively this dreadful principle is carried out, the better for the purposes of those who adopt it. Idleness, at first compulsory, soon becomes a choice — a second nature to man. His home once deserted by its presiding genius, its desolateness and discomfort afford him a plea for seeking other haunts; and the inevitable expenditure of money on such depraved habits as he too readily acquires, forms a fresh drain on the poor wife's earnings. These soon prove insufficient, and the children are placed out, or sold to slavery rather, for what their labour also may bring in.

A life of toil is not man's natural choice; it is an infliction judicially laid on him; the consequence of original guilt, which brought this fair creation into a state of rebellion against God. By gradual accumulation, or by inheritance, some acquire so large a portion as to purchase a seeming indemnity from the general sentence, with power to lay upon their neighbours a twofold, too often a tenfold share of the penalty; and few indeed there are, if in the world there be one, who would hesitate between the choice of a lot that should leave him free to pursue his course through life in whatsoever way might best please him, and one of daily labour for the supply of his daily wants. Undoubtedly,

the idle man is a far more pitiable object than he who fulfils the original decree, and in the sweat of his face eats bread, tilling the ground whence he was taken; for idleness is the parent of many ills, both mental and corporeal, of which cheerful industry knows nothing; and if the secret history of each were laid open to our view, we should, in most cases, regard the laborious lot as the more desirable one; but to be unemployed, to be dependent on something besides his own personal efforts for the means of indulging the flesh, is the natural bent of man's wishes; and here, on the common ground of selfishness, the avaricious gentleman meets the debauched inmate of a hovel, and strikes a bargain with him, to increase the inordinate gains of the one, and secure the lazy indulgences of the other by the sacrifice of the poor man's wife or daughter to this most inhuman, most unchristian system. If this be not a wrong inflicted on the weaker vessel — if the extent and cruelty of the wrong be not aggravated in proportion to her weakness — we know not the meaning of the word.

Mr. Hawkyard, a respectable inhabitant of Huddersfield, moved a resolution at a meeting held there in 1841, on the occasion of Lord Ashley visiting the town, to the effect that all women ought to be withdrawn from the factories. He observed, that if he had himself drawn up the resolution, he would have extended it to the withdrawal of all female labourers. He had watched, he said, for thirty-five years, the evil tendency of this practice, in corrupting the morals of the female population, and disqualifying them from performing the offices of their proper stations in life; rendering them

in early years undutiful to parents, and unfit for the performance of domestic duties as servants; consequently unfit to become the wives of working men. He said that this observation of the consequent movements of society led him to consider the country as fast retrograding to a state of paganism. He had watched the factory mothers training up their children to all descriptions of vice and immorality, training them, in fact, to walk in the very paths into which they had themselves been led under the influence of overlookers—men who could always command such influence, because in the course of their employment they had power to promote, or otherwise to benefit them, if they yielded to their evil solicitations.

The speaker added, that he should blush to mention in public the extent to which he had seen this evil prevailing: so completely had it destroyed domestic comfort, giving many poor children cause to lament through life the profligacy of their parents. This system reversed, he said, "the order of Providence: it reversed the order of nature. There are nearly a hundred females in our immediate neighbourhood who are taking the employment of the males, while the latter are left at home to take care of the children and to cook for their families. I have often witnessed, on a winter's evening, the young children waiting their mother's return from the factories, crying with cold and hunger, the father having left them to take care of themselves. How, indeed, can the man be expected to perform the housewife's part as the woman ought to do; or even as, with all her faults, she does? Through the same

system, the Sabbath is also universally disregarded and profaned. But then, these women are employed at about one-third less wages than the men would have demanded and received, had they been engaged to do the same work."

Bad as is the case where the parties have been naturally brought up to such a course of life, a greater degree of suffering is inflicted on the numerous families drawn from agricultural districts to supply the enormous demand for female labour. We have traced one of these enticed victims so far in a path most uncongenial to her, and shown the gradual encroachments of selfishness in the husband, who would once have shrunk with horror from the suggestion of living in idleness on his wife's laborious earnings; but who, like a well-sharpened knife thrown by to rust, is soon rendered unfit for any work by the inevitable consequences of such continued disuse. The simile holds good in every way, for the comeliness of the instrument must needs be lost, together with its serviceable powers: no longer bright and clean, but incrusted by what is no less unseemly than injurious, it becomes a repulsive object, communicating defilement by its contact.

Nor does the evil end here. Alas! it is but the beginning of sorrows of which none can see the probable termination, in time or in eternity. The rustic mother, once laid as a victim on the blood-stained altar of mammon, where shall her children turn for succour? Not to their earthly father, for he gradually learns to look upon them as means for the further indulgence of idleness and debauchery, now become the elements of his

existence; and the secret consciousness of meditated wrong against them closes up the avenues to his heart, stifles all impulses of natural affection. Not to a heavenly Father, for they have none to guide them into the way of peace. Evil communication forced upon them by depraved companions, corrupts whatsoever of good manners they had acquired. The weeds that naturally spring from our defiled imaginations grow rankly, and thrive, and scatter their seed, and choke up every particle of wholesome vegetation. The means of grace are withdrawn, or rather they, poor creatures, are withdrawn from them. But it belongs to another section of this painful inquiry to exhibit the entail of misery on the children: our present business is with their unhappy parents.

Having shown the wretched man, Smith, as an idler and a drunkard, it can excite no surprise that we should be compelled to notice him as the abandoned companion of depraved female associates. This last step of moral degradation he would gladly have concealed from his wife, whose steady virtue was exposing her to the daily persecution of revenge. Of this fact he had moreover been made aware; for one of his profligate companions, being employed in the same establishment with Alice, had coarsely animadverted upon it in his hearing; and, mortified at the unexpected burst of natural feeling that it elicited from the husband, she lost no time in reporting his delinquency in the presence of his poor wife. We must, therefore, prepare to find an additional feature of aggravated misery impressed on the comfortless home-scenes of a

now wrangling family, the softened manner of the man towards a wife whose patient suffering for well-doing had just come to his knowledge, being met with the natural repulse of a deeply-wounded spirit, conscious of the grievous wrong that beyond all others, rankles in the bosom of a fond and faithful partner. Mutual reproaches ensue; Smith can, indeed, only reiterate the impious doctrines of those who stigmatize marriage as the root of all misery among the poor; and tell her again and again, that if she had not encumbered herself and him with such a troop of children, they would have done well enough in the world; while Alice, feeling that in so doing he was only adding insult to wrong, retorts that, not having quitted the paths of virtue, it never occurred to her to practise child-murder; and adds, that the sort of life he would have led without her is pretty clear from the wickedness to which he has given himself over, as soon as she was set fast at her work, to earn the support of those children and his own also. "The money you spend in drinking, John Smith, and the money you squander on such people as—(naming the girl who had been her informant)—is all earned by the dreadful labour of these weary limbs; ay, and at the price of my innocent baby's life too."

Smith mutters a curse on the mischief-making hussey whose babbling had worked her up to such a pitch; and in so doing, he adds full confirmation to what poor Alice feels, that she almost hoped he would be able strongly to deny.

Henceforth, the miserable dwelling becomes undis-

tinguished in character from those around it. Alice has utterly lost the spring of mind resulting from a sense of her own value and importance to those dependent on her. She works, but it is as a machine, knowing that she is bound to do so. She still loves her children, dearly, but can make no efforts to stay their downward course to the level of the filthy little creatures around them. Querulous complaining, or angry scolding, both alike fruitless, succeed to the mild, firm admonition, and lively persuasion, by which she once ruled her household, and made both them and herself happy. Her husband, either stupified or rendered savage by the drink in which he freely indulged, becomes an object of dislike and dread; the latter sometimes overcome by the exasperation of the moment, at which times words do not always suffice to curb her angry declamation. John Smith little dreamed, when guiding and guarding his poor but loving family to this mart of labour, that he should ever be capable of sending that wife to her employment with her face blackened by the blows of his cowardly fist.

But intervals there are, when all these griefs, past and present, seemed buried in oblivion. On Saturday night, with the prospect of a day's exemption from toil before her, Alice has more than once yielded to the temptation of exciting her exhausted energies by taking a pint or two of strong ale at a house where a female club is held. On these occasions she has gone home considerably later, but with a feeling of exhilaration, a careless indifference as to what may await her there,

an inexpressible inclination to talk and laugh, that, if Smith be in anything approaching to good humour, produces what, to a casual observer, might appear like the revival of former cheerfulness round that altered fire-side. It will not, however, endure five minutes' investigation. Alice Smith could not in those days have been merry while her husband's linen presented such a tattered, dirty appearance, and his outer garments showed rents that a few stitches would have stayed in their progress, and neatly closed; while her children's faces were incrusted with filth, and their whole aspect more like that of young gypsies in a camp than the offspring of an industrious English cottager; while her own person was in little better plight: her hands and face uncleaned from the effects of her disagreeable work, her soiled cap torn and awry, her once shining hair tangled and dishevelled, and her house exhibiting the very picture of hopeless neglect. Neither was that her natural laugh, that now rang so sharply through the little room; nor the conversation, mingled with unmeaning jocularity and coarse terms, anything similar to the light-hearted talk of a happier time. All is changed—all blighted.

No work, of course, is done on that evening: it is deferred till the drowsiness consequent on such false excitement has overpowered her, and the morrow must see the whole week's arrear of washing, mending, and such work as she cannot evade, cleared off. A place of worship is never even named; and while headache and stiff joints render the efforts that she must make almost insufferable, the passing hours are grumbled

through, with bitter complaints that all enjoyments are forbidden to her — that her task on earth is only to wear herself out in thankless toil for others. She does not join the female club, because Nell Carter still possesses influence sufficient to deter her from it; and not unfrequently has the kind, faithful monitress accompanied Alice to her own door, to prevent her straying into scenes of such tempting danger; but the wife, the mother, the manager exist only in name, compared with what they once were; and though fully conscious of the advantage gained by having spent nothing in drink, she is fretful and peevish under the sense of an unsatisfied longing for a stimulant rendered almost necessary by even such occasional use.

Instead of resisting, she now eagerly promotes her husband's plan for placing the two eldest girls in a factory, and even suggests that the boy should go too. She persuades herself that idleness and vice are worse than the same vice would be, if combined with employment; and calculates that their earnings, however small, will help to better the condition of the family. No instruction has been bestowed on them since their arrival in W——. The parents, seeing how very superior they were in that point to all the children around them, trusted to their retaining what they had learned, and never suspected in how short a time all was forgotten like a dream.

But sickness attacks them; a fever is caught by one of the little girls, communicated to another, and the father takes it also. Once more the embers of conjugal and maternal affection are rekindled in poor Alice's bosom,

and the hours of toil, which she cannot afford to intermit, are embittered by intense anxiety for the sufferers at home in attendance on whom she passes the nights so needful for refreshing rest to her own worn-out frame. Their recovery is slow, through the privations of poverty, and Smith evidently appears in danger of consumption; while her own constitution receives a severe shock from the exhausting nature of her alternate occupations in the work-shop and the sick-room. But her turn of service is yet long to run: the loans must be repaid, in exact accordance with the letter of those distinctly worded documents; and for the present we leave her, struggling on her checkered path, less as a woman than as a piece of mechanism which the cool calculations of avaricious men have pronounced to be best suited to their purpose — most serviceable to their plans of getting rich as quickly as possible, and therefore to be secured and retained at any imaginable sacrifice of her own peace and safety, her own comfort and respectability here, and her hope in that eternity which awaits them all hereafter, with its promise of everlasting blessedness, and its threat of inevitable, interminable wo.

CHAPTER XI.

CORROBORATING EVIDENCE.

In every civilized country, there is a large, a privileged class, who may be designated "women that are at ease." These have many opportunities of conferring wide-spread benefits upon another and a far more numerous division of the female population of the land; but nowhere are the former section so truly "at ease" as in England; nowhere are their privileges so many and so great — their minds so cultivated to raise above the miserable puerilities of mere personal decorations — their opportunities of spiritual improvement so abundant — their influence on the great mass of ruling men in church and state, in science and commerce so direct, so acknowledged, so unimpeded. To all of them the grand fundamental truths of Christian doctrine are accessible, and ought to be familiar: they are taught — even in the form of words that constitute a primary part in all education, and the knowledge of which is regarded as a requisite to Christian profession — that they are sinners, lying under a just and righteous condemnation, saved only by the expiatory oblation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself on the cross a sacrifice for

our sins — so ransoming from the power of hell all such as should believe on him, and thankfully accept the precious gift so dearly purchased by his blood. They know that without such faith, and the holiness which it produces, there is no hope for woman or for man; and equally well do they know that one of the attributes of the Lord Jesus, which all who truly love him will take as their own undeviating rule of practice, is to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. We lay before them a plea for such compassion, and call on them, in the Lord's name, to respond to it. We have told a tale of female suffering, the most acute, most destructive to the nature and natural employment of woman, as a help-meet to man, as the mother of a family, the presiding manager of a home; and we seek the fruit of our willing labour in the rousing of their energies to a work which they alone, in human probability, can accomplish — the rescue of their wronged, degraded countrywomen.

All that has been described, it may be admitted, is very distressing; but, happily, it is a mere fiction of the writer's imagination. This brings us to the proof. We have fallen far short of the reality — intentionally so — in order to prove how much less than what does actually and systematically occur every day, in all parts of the land, will harrow up the feelings of a benevolent person, when in some degree individualized. The abstract idea of a suffering family does not strongly affect the mind; but let the parties be known to us, let their names call up some familiar images to our view, and certain facts connected with their past lives

be vividly brought to our recollection when they are spoken of, we are enabled much more feelingly to enter into their trial. For this purpose, a case of constant recurrence has been fixed on, and the same individuals have been kept in view throughout, in order to engage the reader's sympathies, while concentrating her attention more effectually than the pages of a formal report, necessarily prolix and full of repetitions, could do. Into the deepest horrors of that report we, however, have dived; and have, moreover, conversed upon them with one of the gentlemen to whose personal official interrogatories the evidence which we appeal to was given in answer. To this we can add documentary testimony, from unimpeachable sources, now in our hands; and from the whole we gather the following extracts, illustrative of the tale so far recited.

A working-man, who had been for forty years employed in one manufactory, and whose respectability is as great as his intelligence is remarkable, has drawn an affecting picture of what in his childhood he witnessed at home. Describing his mother, he says, "She worked in a manufactory from a very early age; she was clever and industrious, and, moreover, she had the reputation of being virtuous. She was regarded as an excellent match for a working-man. . . . To the best of her abilities she performed the important duties of a wife and mother. . . . She had children apace; as she recovered from her lying-in, so she went to work, the babe being brought to her at stated times to receive nourishment. As the family increased, so anything like comfort disappeared altogether. Not one mo-

ment's happiness did I ever see under my father's roof. . . . He became intemperate, and his intemperance made her necessitous. She made many efforts to abstain from shop-work; but her pecuniary necessities forced her back into the shop. The family was large, and every moment was required at home. I have known her, after the close of a hard day's work, sit up nearly all night, for several nights together, washing and mending of clothes. My father could have no comfort here; those domestic obligations which in a well-regulated house (even in that of a working-man, where there are prudence and good management) would be done so as not to annoy the husband, to my father were a source of annoyance; and he, from an ignorant and mistaken notion, sought comfort in an alehouse. My mother's ignorance of household duties, my father's consequent irritability and intemperance, the frightful poverty, the constant quarreling, the pernicious example to my brothers and sisters, the bad effect upon the future conduct of my brothers — one and all of us being forced out to work so young that our feeble earnings would only produce one shilling a week — cold and hunger, and the innumerable sufferings of my childhood, crowd upon me and overpower me."

This extract from the evidence of Joseph Corbett is but a sample from among many; but it is very graphic, and very touching. His object was to prove the lamentable effects of that ignorance of household management in which girls employed in manufactories are necessarily brought up. But though our Alice Smith has not been shown as one of this class of untaught

wives and mothers, we ask, of what avail could be all her "prudence and good management," when she was compelled to be perpetually absent through the day from the scene of their proper exhibition? Such work as a good housewife will do at home during her husband's hours of day labour, so as to have all neat, and clean, and quiet, for his evening return — such work the female labourer *must* postpone to the period of her own emancipation from the manufactory; and therefore she *must* annoy her husband by the washing, and cleaning, and other domestic operations, in the way above described. Where the occupation is not so very absorbing and enchaining as some that we have got to notice — where the woman sews, or knits, or spins, to eke out the pittance of her husband's wages, she is still present, and able to direct even children to make many arrangements, essential to comfort, under her eye; but how is she to do so, when from breakfast to evening she is at a distant post, engaged in such protracted, wearisome labour as imperatively demands an interval of rest when she reaches her abode? The eye, the voice of a mistress, even when her hands are otherwise engaged, will do wonders towards preserving cleanness and order at least, and making many little preparations for the evening's comfort: but fancy her returning at closing day from a scene of most harassing exertion, amid the whirl of machinery, the clang of hammers, the smoke, and dirt, and offensive exhalations, and far more offensive demoralizing intercourse of a crowded work-room; her skin soiled, her clothing torn, her limbs fatigued, her temper irritated, under

the additional trial of a long walk through streets replete with filth, obscenity, and intoxication; — fancy her looking around on a spectacle of uncleanliness that she must remove, disorder that she must rectify, discomfort that she must bear to be charged with, while herself feeling its hardship more than any others; and who will deny that the results attributed by the foregoing witness to want of knowledge in the secrets of domestic arrangement, are equally inevitable under the want of power to put that knowledge into practice?

It is the monstrous abuse of forcing the female to forsake her proper sphere, that gives rise to such deplorable wretchedness; no previous acquirements can remedy this evil. Christian principle, where its vital power exists, will mitigate temporal suffering here, as it will in every other possible instance, by raising the mind above its earthly trials. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee;" but the effects will be both seen and felt of such a wicked outrage on God's providential government of the world which He has made. We assert the unalienable right of woman to preside over her own home, and to promote the welfare of her own family; we cry out against the grievous wrong that drags her thence to minister to the coveting selfishness of men who will be rich, even in defiance of God's most plain, most stringent laws. Yes, they will be rich; and they are judicially doomed to prosper in their unnatural device; but the snare into which they choose to fall, the foolish and hurtful lusts

that they insist on gratifying, drown them in destruction and perdition.

We cite a few more instances from the authorized reports: their connexion with our story will be perceived.

"In the smaller and dirtier streets of the town, where the working classes reside, there are narrow passages at intervals of every eight or ten houses, and sometimes at every third or fourth house. These passages are, in a very few instances, of the width of nine feet, and about nine feet high; but the great majority are only three feet wide and six feet high; some of them are only two feet and a half wide, (by measurement,) and less than six feet high. They are often flat at the top, though perhaps as often arched; and their length varies from about twelve to twenty feet. These narrow passages are also the general gutter, which is by no means always confined to one side, but often streaming all over the passage. Having made your way through the passage, you find yourself in a space varying in size with the number of houses, hutches, or hovels, it contains. They are nearly all proportionately crowded. Out of this space there are other narrow passages, sometimes leading to other similar hovels. These are the dwellings and workshops of the poorest of the working classes. Where there are the largest number of these, they have the appearance, after going through the narrow, dark passage, or burrow, of a sort of rabbit-warren; one or two of them may almost aspire to the resemblance of a

colony of beavers, *but wanting the green banks and the fresh air.*

"There is often a common dunghill at one end, or in one corner, where everything is cast; but more generally there is nothing but the gutter and the passage into the street." . . . "In front of some of the small houses in these and other places, there are stagnant pools, the colour of dead porter, with a glistering metallic film over them; and sometimes they resemble a sort of disgusting mixture of gruel and soapsuds. After a day's rain, many of them have a little pond in front, the size of a quilt, the colour of liquorice-tea. The ground is always soft and sinking in front of the doors. The effluvia are very offensive, even in winter and cold weather. These dwellings are squalid inside: they have very little furniture, and are in general extremely dirty in every respect.

"Besides the numerous dirty heaps, small pools, and doorway slushes fronting or adjoining the dwellings and work-shops, there are in the town of W—— two vast masses of stagnant filth and putrescence, sufficient to breed a plague throughout the whole of England."

These are evils that cannot be remedied by the wretched people themselves; their whole time is either devoted to the service of others, or passed, among the men, in the listlessness of debauched idleness; while the woman, whose especial business it should be to guard, as far as possible, those of her own household from the noxious effects of such horrible accumulations, is rent away from her home, leaving her chil-

dren at early morning to abide the consequences of exposure to every sort of malaria, and comes home at night to witness the increased portion that her dwelling contributes to the general mass of filth and contagion; continual cleaning within, and some similar care as to the small space before her own door, would, on the part of even one such woman as Alice Smith, not only render her hovel, however poor, an exception to the general character, but would operate as an example for many to follow. The dark system that selects *her* as the individual who must toil throughout the day at a wearisome and most unfeminine employment, because the yearnings of her heart towards those of her own flesh insure her toiling more steadily, and the comparative weakness of her frame compels her to toil more cheaply than man would do—such a system cannot be fairly designated by the word WRONG; it is the most grievous infliction with which powerful injustice can visit the body and the soul of the poor.

We have already cited evidence as to the money-lending plan, the truck system, and Godfrey's cordial: in addition to which we have the fact of laudanum, in its pure, liquid state, being given to an infant by its mother to the amount of sixty drops per diem; but of this more will hereafter appear. In reference to the power possessed by the tool-makers, a woman who had been for at least twenty years working in a screw manufactory, states in evidence, "The tool-makers here are mostly married men. The tool-makers in general ought to be married, because they have the control of the women and girls. A tool-maker has it in his pow-

er to oblige the women, or to disoblige them, by keeping them waiting. It is the rule here for the women to have the tools set in turn, and she thinks this should be the rule invariably."

Respecting the clubs, we copy the following from a document of authority not less conclusive than an official report:

"These clubs are composed of a certain number of females, (married and single,) generally about fifty or sixty in number; and hold their meetings weekly at public houses. The ostensible purpose of these clubs is to protect each other from want in case of sickness, a provision being also made for assistance in case of death. These objects, at first sight, will appear laudable, but on a nearer view of the subject we find evils attached to them which more than counteract any benefits arising therefrom, . . . fifty women meeting together in a public house, and enjoying themselves in drinking, singing, and smoking for two or three hours, and then being brought in contact with a number of men assembled in some other part of the house; the husbands for the purpose of escorting their wives home, and the young men through curiosity, or worse intentions. . . . If, as it is sometimes the case, the husband should bethink himself of the family at home, and urge the wife to depart, she will generally show signs of rebellion, and insist on having her own way in these matters. He, poor man, well knowing that his living depends on her labour, is obliged to submit, and quietly to wait her pleasure, or go to his neglected children alone. This refers to the nights on which their clubs

are held; but similar scenes may be witnessed on every night in the week. As an instance, my attention was drawn to one public house, much frequented by factory workers; I accordingly called about nine o'clock one evening, and found in the tap-room six females, three married and three single; also five men. The women were all workers at one factory. I entered into conversation with one of these women as follows:—'What time do you go to work in a morning?' 'We begin work at six, but I generally get up at five o'clock, as I have upwards of a mile to go.'—'Do you get your breakfast before you go, or is it brought to you afterwards?' 'No, I carry it with me, and also my dinner and drinking.'*—'What time have you allowed for breakfast?' 'Fifteen minutes.'—'What time for dinner?' 'One hour.'—'What time for drinking?' 'Fifteen minutes.'—'What time do you leave at night?' 'Half-past seven o'clock.'—'Do you feel fatigued after your day's work?' 'I can assure you, sir, I do; for ours is very hard work: we have to lift above our heads four combs a minute, each weighing twenty-four pounds.'—'You mean to say, then, that you lift ninety-six pounds per minute, the day through?' 'Yes, sir, and week about. That is the reason you see us here drinking; for we cannot eat much, and we must have something. I brought this bread and butter with me this morning, and you see I have not eaten it.'—'Is your husband in work?' 'No, nor has not been these eighteen months.'—'Does he get

* Drinking is the term used for their tea.

up in a morning when you do?' 'No, I leave him in bed with the youngest child.'—'How many children have you?' 'Three.'—'What age are they?' 'Five, three, and one: *that at three I have not seen sometimes from Monday morning to Saturday night; for it is put to bed before I get home, and I leave it in bed in the morning.*'—'What do you generally get for this sort of employment?' 'Our wages vary from six to eight shillings per week.'—'How long have you been a factory worker?' 'Since I had my second child.'—'How many females are there working in your factory?' 'Thirty.'—'How many of them are married?' 'Ten.'—'How many of the others have had children?' 'Nearly the whole; and them that have not will, if they remain there long; for they are wicked places. I wish I had never known them, for the sake of my children! I can assure you, sir, I have known better days.' Immediately after I had asked these questions, there came in a man with a child crying in his arms: he said to one of the women present, who was his wife, 'Come, Mary, lass come home, for I cannot keep this bairn quiet, and the other I've left crying at home.' She instantly said, 'I won't go home idle devil: I've thee to keep, and bairns too; and if I can't get a pint of ale quietly 'tis tiresome. This is only the second pint that Bess and me has had between us: thou may'st sup, if thou likes, and sit thee down, but I won't go home yet. I shall be ready for the work in the morning if I stay here all night.' The poor man drank with her, and went home with the child; apparently with a very heavy

heart. The appearance of these women was very much emaciated, and they were evidently fast hastening to a premature grave. The evils also affect to an alarming extent the children and young persons, who take the same advantages of their parents as the women do of their husbands, frequently using oaths and harsh language; and in case they are corrected, will turn round, and say, with an imprecation, 'We have you to keep.' One poor woman came to me almost heart-broken, and said that, because her husband had chid two of their daughters for going to a public house, he had made it worse; for they had staid from home two successive nights, and said they would not come home again, for they had their father to keep, and would not be dictated to by him."

Then follows a sad tale of the early depravity of these and other young girls, with remarks on the inevitable consequences of thus herding young people together in manufactories; after which the writer proceeds.

"As I was going from Bradford to Huddersfield one morning, between five and six o'clock, in the middle of January last, the roads being then ankle deep in snow, and which was also coming down in large flakes at the time, I met scores of females going to the factories, and scarcely a male to be seen. The married women above alluded to said to her companion as I passed, 'My bairn did cry this morning when I left.' I asked her how old her baby was? She said, 'Five weeks, sir.' I then asked her where her husband was?

She answered, 'He is in bed, sir; he has nothing to do.' "

Now, where is the English lady, who, on reading these simple statements, will rest satisfied with merely expressing her grief and abhorrence at such inhuman wrong inflicted on her poverty-stricken countrywomen, and make no effort towards removing the burden of cruelty and crime? Heavily does this oppression strike its immediate victim among the lower classes; but far more terrible will be the rebound in that direction whence the outrage proceeded. Let us bear in mind that it is class against class: that the possessor of wealth and power now avails himself of that possession to grind the faces of the poor; and that it is against wealth and power—against all who are rich and influential in comparison with the miserable beings who drag on the wretched existence here described, that the fury of outburst will be directed whenever evil men and seducers, who are now most busily engaged in the work, shall have persuaded them to try the experiment of what numbers and physical force can do to overturn a country. Why, we are organizing an army of ferocious, fearless women, inured to hardship, exercised in masculine labours—drinking, swearing, smoking Amazons, to make an onset for which we are ill prepared, seeing that God cannot be for us if we be even silent abettors of the system that thus brutalizes, thus devilizes the wives and daughters of England. There can be no compromise of our duty, no loop-hole of escape from the condemnation

that overhangs us, if we rouse not ourselves without delay. We may prepare and despatch missionaries to every corner of the world; we may shower bibles like hail over earth's wide surface; we may exhibit in our own conduct and conversation a very model of all that Christian women ought to be; but this one thing God requires of us, and will not acquit us if we refuse to do it, whatever worthy deeds we *may* choose to do, that we enter our strong, urgent, unanimous protest against the frightful degradation of our sisters, and demand from those who have the power to accord it the boon of their emancipation.

Already is a vigorous effort directed to the point of rescuing the young milliners and dress-makers: that, indeed, is a matter so exclusively appertaining to our sex; it is so easy of attainment if only the will be heartily engaged in it, that failure would be an intolerable disgrace; in the present case we have less immediate power; the wrong is not of our direct inflicting, neither is the remedy in our own hands. But the cause is that of God's holy law; the love of Christ constraineth us to embark in it; and it would be unworthy of any Christian lady to doubt that success must ultimately crown the enterprise. We have a female Sovereign who, by the Lord's mercy, is blessed beyond the common lot of royalty in the possession of woman's dearest privileges and enjoyments, — a devoted young wife, a fond and happy young mother, whose palace is the very *beau ideal* of an English home; and by these rich and precious gifts of the Most High, vouchsafed to her, we call upon her Majesty to

take the lead; or at least to look with marked encouragement on the efforts of those who shall go prominently forward in the work. How sweetly will it become a youthful Queen of England to say, with the confidence of one who knows she may be absolute where God's word is unquestionably confirming the decree, "Throughout my realm female slavery SHALL cease." Hundreds of thousands, male and female, old and young, of the flower of her kingdom, would echo that royal SHALL, and bless the lips that uttered it!

Here we close our Second Part. When we open another, it may, alas! be to see greater abominations than these; for female childhood has not yet been portrayed under its premature wrongs. We have very much weakened our plea by refraining from peculiar features in the system of enormous evil, through a solicitude to spare the delicacy of those who have not had the blight of cruel poverty thrown upon the modesty of their nature, and who might take exceptions against such exposure of what lies open before God and his angels; and we shall still adhere to this restrictive rule. Meanwhile, may the Divine blessing, without which no work can really prosper, rest on this humble attempt; and dispose every heart to unite in the one sacred enterprise of abolishing female slavery, and righting the wrongs of Englishwomen!

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND.

THERE was a time when God, manifest in the flesh, walked this earth among the creatures whom he had made. Many wonderful acts were then wrought in the sight of man; divine wisdom proceeded from his lips, miracles of mercy were dispensed by his hands. Great multitudes followed him, pressing on his path: the wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world, hung watchfully on his words, for they hoped to catch something whereof they might accuse him; the ignorant came to be taught, the sick and lame to be healed, the hungry to be fed; and his own disciples, tenacious of the precious privilege, maintained their station nearest to his sacred person. The angry complaint of the rulers was true; "All men go after him."

In the midst of this mingled throng, some were seen boldly endeavouring to force a passage, even to the very feet of the majestic Teacher. They reached at last that innermost circle where the immediate followers of the Lord enclosed him, listening to the gracious words that proceeded out of his lips; and here the intruders were met by a repulse, a rebuke, from which

they would naturally shrink; for the reprovers were men, rough and rude; and the reproved were timid women. A pause ensued: the advancing party were no doubt preparing to retreat, or to remain stationary until such time as the Master's eye might perchance be cast towards the quarter where they stood. Ah! they knew not yet the love that filled the Master's heart, the omniscient mercy to which their secret desire was known, by which their bosom's unuttered prayer was already granted. The Lord turned; and he, the meek and lowly One, showed himself exceedingly displeased: he rebuked the disciples who had been rebuking them; and as the too officious guards shrank back, the words that conveyed reproof to them fell as sweetest music on the ears of that group of mothers, and elder sisters, and gentle friends, for he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Perhaps you have looked upon some fanciful painting, intended to represent the scene, where the Saviour's gentle smile invited the little wondering Israelites to approach; where the good Shepherd gathered those lambs in his arms, and carried them in his bosom: where the young babe nestled in the folds of his robe, and the less helpless caught its hem, or clung round his knees, or pressed the glad head beneath the hand laid on it in solemn benediction:—you would have called it beautiful; and your heart has melted, perhaps it melts even now, at the picture your own fancy is painting of what no mortal tints can adequately portray. Why do you feel thus? Because little children

are so engaging, their comparative innocence is so touching, their relative harmlessness and unacquaintance with the woes of life appeal so eloquently to the tenderer sensibilities of our nature; because, too, you attach, as well as you may, a real, though as yet not a fully explained significancy to the solemn words, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Ah, lady, take from any part of your apparel that very trivial, though indispensable, appendage, a common pin; look well upon it, and then I will show you another picture: I will show you the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus not merely barring the way by which mothers might bring their little ones to HIM for the blessing that he waits to bestow, but opening a way, and forcing the mothers into it, by which they must carry those little ones to the brink of a pit, and fling them, helpless, hopeless, succorless, into the iron grasp of Satan.

But first let us pause, and inquire where now is He, who, when the young children of Judea were brought to him, "took them up in his arms, and put his hands on them, and blessed them;" what is he doing, and what is he saying? He is in heaven, gone to fulfil the purpose for which he then came down from thence: our great High Priest, having offered up the all-sufficient sacrifice of himself on the altar of the cross, as a propitiation for your sins and mine, has entered the holy of holies, there to appear before God for us, presenting the tokens of that atoning sacrifice, ever living to make intercession for such as we are, who come to God by him. He pleads for us as a Mediator, he gov-

erns us as a King; and to effect these two great operations he must be cognizant of all that concerns us. At what moment of our lives could we feel content to believe that our Lord and Master forgets us — that he ceases to feel for our infirmities, to have compassion on our weakness, to plead his sacrifice for the pardon of our continual offences? If you know Jesus as a Saviour, you must be able to realize this more powerfully than I can express it; if you know him not, away with every other topic, until you have grounded yourself in the faith on which the salvation of your own soul depends. But, while thus employed, in heaven itself, what does he say to us, his disciples? To each and all he says, "I know thy works." To some he addresses the encouraging language, "I know thy works . . . . and service;" or, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." To others he utters the startling rebuke, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead;" and, alas! to how many the menace of rejection, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold or hot!" To us, collectively, he speaks, without distinction, without reservation, "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

And for a rule of life, for a plain standard of the works that he requires of us, we have in every possible situation that accountable beings can be placed in, the surest of all guides—his unchangeable words, concern-

ing which he has declared of every man, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." In the case now before us, where children are concerned, we have not only the directions given by the Holy Ghost through the holy men of old, prophets, and apostles, commanding us to train them up in the way that they should go, but we have the Lord Jesus Christ himself admonishing us, "Suffer little children to come unto ME, and forbid them not." Forbidding a thing is not confined to a verbal prohibition: blocking up the way of access, turning them by force, or by deceit alluring them into a different way — concealing from them the fact of the Saviour's nearness, of his willingness to bless them, or their great need of that blessing, — all these and various other modes of interposing, amount to what is so plainly denounced as forbidding their approach; and a fearful prospect is theirs who stand in this position when the Lord proceeds to give unto every one of us according to our works. What testimony did he demand of the surpassing love in which the pardoned disciple professed to hold him? "Feed my lambs." We know, that, on earth, the Lord repeatedly evinced his especial tenderness for the little ones; and can we for one moment suppose that his "bowels of compassion" are less moved towards them, now that the rich purchase-money is fully paid for their redemption, and in heaven itself he waits to be gracious to every creature who will seek his help? We cannot so imagine: we may contrive to forget, but deny it we may not. Throughout the short, sad sketch that must now be drawn, let us keep

in view the objects and the incident with which we set out: the Saviour inviting their approach; the disciples who own his name surrounding both him and them; and the young children waiting to be led forward by such as know the way to that Saviour's feet.

From the royal lady who wields the sceptre of England, down to the most squalid female beggar who prowls about the street for the prize of a half-gnawn bone, or ragged shred, none can dispense with the produce of the pin manufactory. The demand is so universal, the articles so insignificant both as to size and cost, and their wasteful loss so incessant, that it is a matter of wonder to any who take the trouble to think about it, how such a consumption can be supplied. By minute investigation, too, we may perceive that there is a good deal of nice workmanship bestowed upon it, to furnish its many indispensable qualities; to render it at once so slender and so firm; so smooth and tapering; to fix its round, flat head with sufficient steadiness; to give its sharp point an edge that will not rend the most delicate fabrics; and so to whiten it that no unseemly coarseness of the original metal may remain. In the very small size that it can be made to assume, it is really a marvellous piece of delicate workmanship, overlooked only because it is proverbially worthless from the immense quantities perpetually tossed about; but little do the majority of those who use it know of the heart-rending circumstances under which its manufactory is carried on. It will not be the writer's fault, if a tongue is not henceforth added to the silent appendage of each reader's toilet, pleading for those who,

immured in the dingy receptacles of infant labour, misery, and wrong, cannot speak for themselves, save only as their sorrows and sufferings cry aloud to him whom they know not — whom they are not permitted to approach — whose loving invitation never reaches them, because it falls unheeded or rejected on the cold ear of paternal and mercantile speculation, intent only, the one on a present supply of craving wants, the other on accumulating capital, to be expended in widening the gulf between the unfeeling rich man and his poverty-stricken brother of the dust!

We enter at once on a new scene — the interior of a pin manufactory.

It is winter: the chilliness of a November day, while the fog and frost divide the rule between them; and the comfort of a warm wrapper, aided by the prospect of a bright fire in our well-curtained and carpeted room, when the very short day shall have closed, is not only a welcome but an essential element in the contentment with which we endure these ills of our climate. Pass on, through the misty, slippery street, and turn into yonder building. It does, indeed, look more like an out-house in a state of dilapidation than a place where artisans assemble to pursue a thriving trade; but the interior will prove that the latter is its real purpose. We proceed through several departments of busy employment: in one there are children winding slender wire, which, being passed through a machine by steam-power, is drawn out by men. Here the boys work, generally, under their fathers; and whatever we may think of their close, protracted confinement, the labour

itself is not severe. In the next room we find many little fellows, more fatiguingly employed, being perpetually on foot, walking to and fro, assisting their seniors by the operation of straightening the coiled wire furnished by the drawers, which the men cut into lengths and point. Next we find a third party of boys, mixed with about an equal number of men; they spin, by a very exact, monotonous process, some wire into a spiral shape, which is subsequently cut into rings, forming heads for the pins. Hitherto, we have found no girls, nor very little children; but enter the next department, and the scene will change.

Here is a room, if we can call it by that name, eight yards in length, by six in breadth, and about nine feet high. A row of small, dingy windows, along each side, admit such light as there is; and here, seated before machines unlike any that we have yet surveyed, are about fifty children, of whom the eldest may be thirteen; but the general age is less, much less—they are mere babes. Near each of them is placed a quantity of the prepared heads, from which they pick out one with the pointed head of the wires, also supplied to them, and passing it up the shank, they fix it at the blunt end; and holding the pin obliquely under a small hammer, turn it round, until, with four or five smart strokes, it is properly secured in its place. Such is the general aspect of the apartment, such the employment of its inmates, and just as we now behold them they have been engaged since eight o'clock in the morning, with the certainty of carrying it on till eight in the

evening: how much longer they may, on any pretext, be detained, no one can tell.

Stunted in their growth, bony, pallid, and most wretchedly unhealthy in their looks; filthy beyond expression in their persons, with scarcely rags enough to hold decently together, these miserable little beings appear conscious of but two objects capable of attracting their notice beyond the work about which their poor dirty little hands are incessantly moving. One of these is the very small fire-place, where an exceedingly scanty portion of fuel is just emitting smoke enough to prove that fire smoulders beneath. Towards this, many a longing look is cast, while the blue lips quiver, and the teeth chatter, and the fingers are well nigh disabled from moving by the benumbing influence of cold. One might suppose that the crowding of so many living creatures within that confined space, would ensure heat enough; but oppressive as the air feels, it evidently brings no warmth to them. Empty stomachs, and curdling blood, never set in motion by exercise or play, will produce a chill not to be overcome by these damp exhalations, even if the frequent entrance of a draught of colder though not purer air from neighbouring workshops did not increase it: and as to the fire, it may serve to speak of, to think about, to look towards, but for any purpose of warmth, such as these poor infants require, the grate might just as well be empty.

But another object divides their attention: a woman on whose hard features many violent passions have conspired to plough indelible lines, whose inflated nostril, compressed lip, and restless eye, bespeak alike a

cruel disposition, and watchfulness for means to gratify it, stalks to and fro, with a supple cane in her hand, intent to catch at a case of delinquency — a false movement, a momentary flagging of energy, a slight indication of the drowsiness peculiarly inevitable in children, when limb and spirit are fatigued, the mind unoccupied, and natural playfulness wholly restrained — sufficient to warrant the application of the well-known weapon to their poor little heads or shoulders. Occasionally she disappears, as if to invite a feeling of momentary security; and then, perhaps, some of the small hammers will tap less vigorously on the heads of the pins; some cramped fingers are stretched, and some half-frozen ones are held in the mouth for the comfortable refreshment of a warm breath; some little bare feet are briskly rubbed together, or perhaps some kind-hearted brother might take his baby-sister on his knee, and chafe her arms and ankles, numbed with the bitter cold of such unnatural stagnation; but, noiselessly, yet rapidly, the watcher re-enters, the cane is uplifted, and in the sudden acceleration of machinery something is gained by the traffickers in infant life, while only a few among the delinquents get any blows worth speaking of; and perhaps a lock or two of flaxen hair may be twitched out by her left, while her right hand administers the passing switch to some culprit, flurried by the sudden surprise into a blundering movement!

In the far corner of this prison-house sits one whose features are not quite strange to us, though greatly altered for the worse. It is Betsey, the second daughter

of Alice Smith, and of all that family the one who most resembles her mother. Her anxious looks are frequently, though stealthily, sent along the line of her workmates, whenever the overlooker's back is fairly turned; and if we follow them, we shall find that they rest on one whom we should scarcely have expected to find here — her little curly-headed brother Joe, who is no longer allowed to sit next her, because she was several times detected helping him in his work, to the unavoidable neglect of her own, in order that the blows reserved for him might fall on herself. In vain was her own allowance of strict discipline increased, while his was not diminished; in vain was a weal of considerable size raised across her neck for thus transgressing: so incorrigible is the temper of this girl, that she actually interposed her own head between her brother's and the hand lifted to strike him; and for this he was removed into a very different neighbourhood, where two older hands understood the value of such a scapegoat, and made ample use of the manager's spite against him, to purchase exemption from punishment, not unfrequently deserved by themselves. All this was very dreadful to Betsey, and her frequent cries of entreaty on his behalf proved it; but she is wiser now: she finds that by appearing indifferent to his sufferings she can better mitigate them; and those stolen looks are all the sign she gives of unchanged solicitude about him.

But where is their mother? Surely the warm-hearted Alice Smith would at all hazards rescue her little one from such ill usage. Do not put that question to

Betsey: she saw her mother die, the victim of what would have been a trifling indisposition, had it fallen on her before her frame was so toil-worn, her heart so broken; and scarcely was the grave closed over her, when, in a half-drunken fit, the father of her helpless children gave them the curse of a most profligate step-mother, who sent them all out to work on such terms as their weak efforts were deemed worth, while she, by her outrageous conduct, drove Smith to enlist as a soldier. She now subsists on the wages of these poor children's labour, added to what her own abandoned course of life may bring in; and having none to contradict her, or to attempt any sort of control over her words or actions, she is no worse to the destitute little ones than she would be to her own, had she any. It is true, they have no vestige of what their mother once deemed indispensable comforts; they are not washed, nor combed, nor indulged, as formerly, with a weekly change of linen, or rather of rags; neither is any kind or degree of instruction, religious, moral, or social, ever placed within their reach; but their condition is really better than that of many working beside them, who are exposed at home to the ebullitions of drunken rage, or spiteful cruelty, from which there is no escape. The two youngest, as yet incapable of earning anything, have, on the step-mother's pathetic representation, been received into the union work-house; and Polly has employment in another line, where she has made acquaintance more to her liking than any she can find at home. Thus, deserted on all sides by their natural associates, the two children before us are thrown completely upon

each other's affection, and very touching it is to witness the strength of that concentrated attachment. Betsey has a more womanly mind than many nearly twice her age; she has looked upon the objects that have crossed her early path of sorrows with an observing eye; and this has induced a sort of tact that might pass for cunning contrivance, if any selfish object was to be gained by it; but all self being, on her part, wrapped up in her little brother, it is never brought to bear upon any other point than his well-being: in all that concerns her, individually, she is a simple child. He, poor little fellow, from being the spoiled pet of the house, has passed under such harsh discipline, and endured so many buffetings, that his spirit is completely broken; he is not now the bold, bright-eyed boy, who, even when tumbling among cinders, or splashing in the liquid mud before his father's door, attracted notice by his energetic bearing and unflinching gaze, and merry shouting tones, but a trembling, shrinking, hesitating whisperer, afraid, as it would seem, of trusting his own step, or hearing his own voice, or encountering the look of any eye save Betsey's. One idea seems to have taken possession of his mind, and that one relates to his mother; but of its exact nature neither he nor any one about him is conscious.

It is fatiguing to prolong the observation of these wretched little automata, with their small hammers, so monotonously sounding on the dirty-looking manufacture before them. The pins are not yet whitened or polished, and nothing here looks neat, nothing feels comfortable. You might be tempted to stroke the head of

some pretty, engaging child, and to try whether a smile would not call up some answering expression of gladness in its heavy countenance, but your hand shrinks from the contact of that uncleanly hair, and you *cannot* smile with such an aggregate of infant misery before you. Yet, the pain produced by the contemplation is transient; you are not obliged to remain here a minute longer than your own free choice may prompt you to stay. This spectacle of wretchedness, this close, unwholesome, fetid air, may at once be changed for any enlivening, refreshing spot that it may please you to repair to. But they must remain: their hours of slavery will not expire till the glare of gas shall have long shone upon their work, and the heated atmosphere have prepared them to meet with a more sensitive shudder the sudden gust of a November night's wind. They must persevere; and if drowsiness steals on their heavy little eyelids, the monitory switch is at hand to chase it away. No friend will look upon them then; none but He whose eyes as a flame of fire pierces the deepest shades that cruelty can draw around to hide her impious work; and the disregarded invitation of whose gracious lips yet stands recorded on the page that they dare not look upon: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUNDAY STROLL.

We are now to take a Sunday stroll in the suburbs of this industrious town. The country being a Christian land, and most of the large employers being attendants on some place of worship where the word of God is read, and the precepts therein set forth inculcated, we might expect that when the industrious poor have fulfilled that part of the commandment which tells them, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do," it would be considered a duty by their well-taught employers to see that they enjoyed means for observing the remainder, — for keeping the seventh day holy, as a season both of spiritual refreshment and of bodily rest. Considering the vast profits realized by their means, the masters might be supposed to set apart a fair proportion of such gains, for the erection of a place of worship, and the support of faithful teachers; and as regards the little children, for a very effective system of Sunday school instruction. Considering the intense anxiety that they manifest for the proper education of their own families, and the horror with which they would recoil from the bare idea of leaving one of them in utter ignorance, we may pic-

ture to ourselves their Christian solicitude to see their little labourers making the most of the only day allowed them for the acquisition of even the first rudiments of the most common instruction: but everybody knows that such expectations are perfectly absurd, save only where one stands out, in despised notoriety, from the great mass, and devotes himself to a cause utterly overlooked, yea, scorned by the generality of his brethren. We will just look about us on this, the day when, by the law of the land, all shops and manufactories are closed, all churches opened, and all classes are supposed to assemble together before His throne of grace, at whose throne of judgment they must and shall meet, to render an account of all that has been done, and all that has been evaded.

But lest we be suspected of drawing a fanciful sketch, untrue to nature, we will only in thought accompany a gentleman, one officially deputed to investigate those things, from whose note-book we copy the following entries, *verbatim*, as made at the time.

"*Sunday, March* 14. Walked about the town — streets and outskirts — during church time. Met men, singly and in groups, wandering about in their working aprons and caps, or with dirty shirt sleeves tucked up, and black, smithy-smutted arms, and grimed faces. Some appeared to have been up all night — probably at work to recover the time lost by their idleness in the early part of the week; perhaps drinking. Lots of children seen in groups at the end of courts, alleys, and narrow streets, playing, or sitting upon the edge of the common dirt-heap of the place, like a row of

sparrows, and very much of that colour, all chirruping away. Groups of children, all in their working dresses, playing about on the open waste at the back of the new church and parsonage now building at the end of —— street. Boys, from nine to seventeen years of age, playing at marbles, in groups of five, and from that to ten. Adults of about twenty, and from that to thirty years of age, looking on — some smoking, vacant, listless — not really attending to the game. Boys fighting; bad language, and bloody noses. Women in their working dresses, standing about at doors or ends of passages, with folded arms. Little boys sitting in holes in the ground, playing at mining with a small pick-axe. Girls playing about in various ways; all dirty, except one group of about half a dozen girls, near —— lane, of the age of from nine to fifteen, who are washed and dressed, and are playing, with continual screams and squeaks of delight, at jumping from the mounds of dirt, dung, and rubbish-heaps, which are collected there, and cover a considerable space. Some fell with a sprawl; in a moment, all were scuttling up the dirt-heaps again. Scarcely any houses with children sitting at the doors washed and dressed. A few small houses, not in courts and yards, but facing the streets, were cleansed, i. e. had the brick floor washed and sanded; but most of these sold cakes, oranges, sugar-sticks, and small-beer; the cleaning a part of the business, and a sort of rare attraction to their tribe of dirty little customers. Adults seated smoking, or with folded arms, on the threshold of their door, or inside their houses, evidently not in-

tending to wash and shave. Many of them sitting or standing in the house, with an air of lazy vacancy — they did not know what to do with their leisure or with themselves. . . . No working men walking with their wives, either to or from church or chapel, or for the sake of the walk. No brothers and sisters. Until the issuing forth of the children from the Sunday schools, with all those adults who had attended some place of worship, nothing seen but squalid disorder, indifference, and utter waste, in self-disgust, of the very day of which, in every sense, they should make the most. With all this, no merriment — no laughter — no smiles. All dulness and vacuity. No signs of animal spirits, except with the girls on the dust-heaps."

These memoranda, it will be observed, were noted down, as the writer moved past the various spots; — a plain sketch from nature, or rather from the unnatural perversion of all that God has made; of all that man, in his moral, social, intellectual capacity, has undertaken to frame into a civil community. Darker features belong to the picture, even as respects mere children, but these we forbear to introduce: our present business is with such little ones as labour at the pin-heading; and we will once more call at the squalid dwelling where Alice Smith had hoped to establish all the comforts belonging to a poor but well-ordered home.

Two only of its former inmates are there: Polly has been called, by a boy somewhat older than herself, to join a strolling party of companions, whose steps we do not wish to trace. The step-mother has not yet roused herself from the heavy sleep that usually fol-

lows her long Saturday night's debauch; and Betsy steals now and then a fearful glance towards the dirty bundle of rags on which she lies snoring, while she heaps a few sticks and cinders on a spark of fire communicated to the torn leaf of a Bible; given probably by some compassionate visitor to the wretched woman, who received it for the sake of the accompanying shilling, and then used it as so much waste-paper.

"Own mammy wouldn't have let us burn a Bible," murmurs the little boy, as the sacred words rapidly disappear in a spreading tinge, which, however, yield no flame: "own mammy called it a holy book, and said we should all learn to read in it."

"Hush, dear: if she hears you talk of own mammy, she'll set about abusing daddy—I don't like to hear her."

"Daddy kicked me sorely when he was drunk, but he never hurt me when he wasn't. I love my own mammy best, and I wish she'd make haste back."

"I'm always telling you, Joey, that she can't come back; for they put her into a pit, ever so deep, as you might remember, for it wasn't so long ago."

"I remember it well enough; but I know the parson said something over her about sleeping and waking—waking at last he said. Depend on it, she'll wake and come up again."

"If I thought she'd wake," says Betsy, with a sigh, "'twould be a trouble to me; for they screwed that coffin down over-tight for her to open, and the men stamped upon the clay as fast as they shovelled it over

her. She could never get through it all, if she did wake: and she'd better sleep on."

"No I shan't sleep any longer," exclaims the shrill voice that always, even in its kindest tone, makes those little ones start. "It's proper enough of you to wish I might; for I have a hard time of it, taking much trouble about other people's brats. You can't help that. Where's Poll? Gone off, I dare say, for no good: that girl will bring me and my honest family to shame. Well, blow away, and heat the kettle while I dress."

Her orders are obeyed with the alacrity of secret dread; and the motherless children are glad that she so completely mistook what, in the earnest feeling of the moment, was spoken so distinctly as to catch her waking ear.

Another hour sees them wandering among dirt-heaps, desiring to find play-fellows, but with so little heart for play, that they want to be roused to the very mood for it. At a loitering pace, they scramble on, Joe every now and then jumping over some trifling obstruction, and crying "Hollo!" in a tone the very ghost of what it had been in former days. Nakedness, cold, hunger, may damp the mirthful spirits of childhood; but to quench them, nothing operates so rapidly and effectually as protracted labour in a confined spot, even without the superaddition of such cruelty and fear as these poor children have known by daily experience, and look for on the morrow, even as they endured it yesterday. Thus they stroll along, until the last row of dirty hovels is left behind, and they are alone in a narrow lane, bordered by hedges.

"Here's a gap," says Betsy; "let's get through, and find out what's on t'other side."

Nothing but a thick covering of dead leaves on the ground, while the naked branches of a tree hung over their heads, rewarded this search. The leaves were damp and dirty, yet they might serve as playthings, and the poor little creatures busy themselves in the idle amusement of kicking and tossing them about; occasionally pushing each other down, and laughing at the exploit. In this way, half an hour is passed, and Joe, having made his way from under a mass that his sister had flung upon him, suddenly calls out,

"I say, Betsy, a' done, a' done; I want to talk about own mammy."

"Well, it's no use talking about her, for we can't get her back."

"That's more than we know: it's come in my head that daddy said to Richards, she was gone to heaven; and I don't believe heaven is at the bottom of that grave, is it?"

Betsy muses, with a look of recollection, and says, "No, for certain, Joey, it's overhead. I've a notion, Polly can tell us about that; but it's so long since I heard any talk, I quite forget. It's a bonny place, too; I heard speak of it for a very bonny place."

"She's there," says the boy, confidently; "and if she got out of the coffin to go there, she can very well get out of heaven to come here; so you needn't say any more to me about her not coming back. I wonder how *she'll* look, when own mammy comes again to turn her out of doors, neck and crop!"

Betsy gazes on her little brother, for a flash of his native fire has appeared again; and he stands quite erect, with his head thrown back, and his dirty, but beautiful features all alive with unwonted animation. His voice too — poor child! the fond vision of a returning mother, in whose bosom he may once again nestle, has produced this strange effect. Betsy is secretly convinced that he is wrong, but does not know how to undeceive him. The lessons that reached their ear from the village pulpit had not penetrated any farther; they were considered too young for the schools; and neither father nor mother could read. The little girl's heart is full, and her voice falters as she remarks, "I can't think own mammy will ever come back: daddy may, for he's only gone to Ingee, they say; but mammy won't get out of heaven — it's so far off."

"So you say, but you don't know. Look, look, here's some boys and girls coming from towards the school! They'll be sure to know, and I'll ask them. Hollo! come this way!" and he runs to meet them, followed by Betsy.

Some of the party pass on; they have other sport in view, and this very short holiday must not be trifled with: two or three, however, are willing to stop, and the child asks, "Can you tell me how far it is to heaven?"

"No, I can't: I don't know where 'tis, nor nothing about it."

"Don't you hear about it at the school?" asks Betsy.

"No: they talk about London, and other places, and

like enough that's one; but I never trouble my head to listen."

"It's no place at all," observes another, "but a great rich man. I heard my granny say sometimes, when the wages was spent, and nothing to eat, 'Heaven help us!'"

"No, no, it's a place," cries Betsy, anxiously; "for when mammy was going to die, she looked at us and said, 'God in heaven bless you!'"

"Like enough: they often talk of *him* in master's workshop." And here the boy repeats some forms of imprecations, and other blasphemous expressions, that must be passed over.

"If I went to school," says Joe, fretfully, "I'd get more learning than you; I'd mind what they said there, and remember it."

A box on the ears, from the biggest boy, cuts short his speech; the little fellow's momentary excitement is past, and he begins to sob and cry, while Betsy throws her arms round him, and begs for mercy.

"The impudent young cur," says another, kicking up a heap of wet leaves into his face, "to think he'd be a better scholar than us, that's twice his age;" and as they move off, the two orphan children slink away in the contrary direction.

Late in the evening Polly comes home; and, as it had been agreed on, they ask her the question that perplexes them: "Whereabouts is heaven, where own mammy is gone to?" A very deep colour rises to the girl's face; then, casting down on them a look of supreme contempt, she mutters, "What a couple of great

fools you must be, to believe there's any such place!" and hurries to her own corner.

The step-mother presently returns from gossiping at the door, and attacks her, not for staying out, but for coming home hungry, and asking for supper. Polly recriminates, and the children hear much of language similar to that quoted in the morning, but nothing to throw any light on the matter so interesting to them. They nestle in their miserable bed, and are soon asleep, to open their eyes on another week of toil and unpitied suffering. The frequent start, and half-uttered cry of imaginary torment, betray how busily fancy is occupied with dreams of the future, grounded, as they are, on bitter experience of the past; and in order to account for the reluctance with which their heavy eyes will open to the morrow's dawn, we will accompany them throughout a day's work at the seemingly light employment of sticking heads on the pins that are placed in shallow trays before them.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DAY IN THE WORKSHOP.

ALTHOUGH the little headers do not go to their work till near eight o'clock, Polly starts for hers much earlier; and the step-mother does not think of rising till long after they are all gone. The children, therefore, must leave their beds before the dull light of a November morning has prevailed over the lingering shades of night, and having put on their soiled rags, without any attempt at cleansing their equally soiled persons, they kindle a fire, and commence cooking the miserably thin porridge, or rather gruel, that forms their breakfast. The supply of meal is very scanty; and the elder girl, calculating that she requires more nourishment than those junior to herself—particularly as Betsy looks younger and Polly older than their real ages would lead us to suppose—secures her share, by making the mixture tolerably thick, then subtracting her own portion, and diluting the rest for the little ones. In addition to this, a kettle was to be placed on the fire, and the latter roused to tolerable briskness, that whenever Mrs. Smith chooses to rise, she may be able to make her tea. A new penny loaf is procured, and a

slice of butter placed beside it for her use; and the children, by whose toil these indulgences are mainly provided, sit eyeing the tempting provisions while swallowing down the watery, tasteless, unsubstantial stuff, that their mother, even when most pressed by poverty, would have deemed it a wrong to serve out to them. This done, they eagerly pressed close to the little fire; for long hours must pass before they may again enjoy that luxury; and a cold drizzle without warns them of the state in which they will reach their place of labour. But the time is short; Betsy soon puts on the remains of her mother's old bonnet, and ties the fragment of a cap on her brother's head with a piece of a handkerchief, taking him by the hand for the walk. They go forth, unnoticed and uncared for, to make their way through the filthy streets, until, benumbed with cold, and wet with the fine but penetrating rain, they reach the manufactory.

Here they stand, side by side, with a lurking hope that they may once more be permitted to sit down together; but the reproach of the woman extinguishes that hope, as she pushes them in contrary directions: they take their posts, and commence the work as already described. Such a collection of cold, hungry, half-naked children, is scarcely to be found in any other department. Shoes and stockings are very rare among them; a whole garment no less so; and an instance of warm clothing suited to the season, it would be vain to seek. They are not the children of decent mechanics, very few of whom would send their little ones here, but of street beggars, casual vagrants, and

those Irish poor who have wandered over to what they hear is a richer country than their own, and find themselves perishing in it. Hence there are few instances of regular attendance, a week's work being often all that is sought; but each batch appears so like the preceding, that the difference is hardly noticed; and some are regular in their attendance, even for a long while together. The employer never comes here: the management is vested exclusively in the "master" placed over the shop, who renders no account of his conduct to the children; and who delegates his authority on equally irresponsible terms, as regards everything but the amount and quantity of the work done, to the female overlooker, whose cane he frequently borrows to inflict a harder blow on some defenceless culprit. In a horde of little strangers, untaught, and ungoverned at home, it can hardly be doubted that occasional demands would be made on the patience and forbearance of even the most benevolent disposition: but where no such feeling exists, and where the sole object is to see the utmost done in the shortest time, it may readily be supposed that the ill humour occasioned by one instance of awkwardness or perverseness finds many a victim on which to vent itself.

Next to little Joe Smith sits a boy not much bigger than himself, but several years older: his parents are poor Irish people, and this child, unable to bear the close confinement, after his long life in the bogs, had run away some weeks before. However, he found his sick mother's sufferings so greatly aggra-

vated by the loss of the weekly fifteen pence, that on this morning he ventured to place himself near the door, where the master seeing him, ordered him in to work. He is a giddy fellow, fond of looking about him; and, in spite of hunger, and rags that will scarcely hold together, he is full of restless vivacity. At this time, he is scanning the assembled party, to discover how many old acquaintances are there; but he keeps his fingers going with the hammer; and looking another way, he gets his thumb severely pinched, and cries out, though by no means nobly, "Och, murder."

"You little Irish vagabond!" exclaims the dreaded woman, who had glided close behind him; and at the same time hits him a severe stroke over the head with her cane: "what business has the likes of such lazy beggars as you to be sitting here?"

The boy cries out again; for the poor little head had already been bruised by a fall or a blow, and the pain is very great. For the offence of so doing, he receives another, and heavier rap, which makes him roar for mercy, and hold up his hands to protect his head. Just at this moment the "master" enters — not the proprietor, as we have before explained, but the man who manages the concern — and while the female overlooker makes a violent complaint to him, little Joe whispers, "Hush, hush! the more you cry, the more they'll lick you."

This friendly caution only involves the poor child in his comrade's punishment; the man, having a heavy rod in his hand, goes up to the Irish boy, and

telling him he had earned a thrashing by running away, which he may as well get now, along with his present desert, proceeds to chastise him most severely, until his cries subside into the suffocated sobs of complete exhaustion; then turning to Joe, who was pointed out to him by the woman as a confederate, who had whispered encouragement to the noisy rebel, he gives him two or three cruel strokes, under the last of which he falls off his seat, either from weakness or terror.

"And now," continues the governor, "I'll keep ye all a good twenty minutes past the time, to make up for the loss, and riot, and trouble, you've treated us to. Keep a sharp look-out over them, Kitty, and don't spare the switch."

Poor little Betsy! the effort by which she suppressed both the scream and the tear, and refrained from even moving to her brother's assistance, was a terrible one. It convulsed her tender frame, and made her hand tremble as with an ague. She now sits, apparently quiet, but with a film over her eyes, and a choking in her throat, and a pain in her side, often experienced by adults of a nervous temperament, but a strange concomitant of early childhood. All is outwardly still again; terror has paralyzed the minds, but quickened the mechanical movements of those poor little slaves. Some have fathers or mothers, who love them dearly, and bitterly grieve over the hard necessity that compels them, perhaps in sickness or other infirmity, or the total inability to find employment themselves, to send their children out to labour;

others have selfish, unfeeling parents, who gladly use them as machines to make money for their own indulgence; and others, again, are orphaned or deserted creatures, feeling themselves alone in the world, toiling for strangers; or to earn the price of a scanty meal for themselves, if they be above the earliest age. But all are laid under the same benumbing spell, in a place where the light of day never falls broadly and cheerily through the narrow, dirty pains of dull glass; where fresh air is excluded, where freedom never comes, where cleanliness is unknown, and mirth, the very element of a childish spirit, would be punished as a crime.

Days wear on, and those who came hungry at eight o'clock are sick from exhaustion by noon; but few indeed look forward to the luxury of a dinner. It has been observed that this department is supplied from the very poorest of the poor, many of whom have no home, creeping under carts, or into gateways, for shelter at night, or owing the comfort of a share in some filthy bundle of straw and rags to the compassion of such as let beds at two or three pence a night, or that of the miserable tenants who occupy them. These have no home by day except the workshop; and unless they have begged or stolen a scrap besides their mouthful at breakfast, they have nothing to eat till they get away to forage at night. These children are the most pitiable objects imaginable; their sunken, glassy eyes, hollow cheeks, and the general fall of their features, tell a tale that man may find it convenient to turn from, but which is ever prolonging its

sad, silent appeal to Him whose eyes are in every place. Others have brought with them lumps of bread, with perhaps a bit of cheese, or bacon, which they devour on the spot, and then go out to lounge in the street, for they have no heart to play; and a few repair to homes, where a welcome sweetens the poor fare set before them, and a parental ear is open to their tale of trouble or alarm.

But the hour has slipped away, and the machinery, sensible and insensible, is again set agoing, to cease no more till six or seven hours have elapsed. It is now that childish endurance is put to the test: those who have not had their hunger appeased, or at best, not satisfied, begin to droop; the back bends to a more decided curve; the shoulders rise higher, and the head declines on one side, while a confused giddiness renders even the monotonous process of heading difficult. In other cases, where nature has been tolerably well satisfied, the restlessness inevitable among growing children, increased by the temporary stimulus of food and drink, becomes a source of misery to themselves, and of torment to their languid comrades. Many a naked foot is stealthily kicked out under the board; many a ragged elbow jerked in half-nervous, half-mischievous invasion of a neighbour's confined space; and some, in the imprisoned state of their limbs, indulge in the liberty of making hideous faces, provoking a smothered titter from the observer, and a smart blow from the overlooker, should she detect what is of course construed into a premeditated insult. Thus they go on, hour by hour, until all is weariness — a weariness

inconceivable by any who have not endured the imprisonment of a protracted sedentary occupation—a weariness that makes the bones feel as though grated on by some harsh, foreign substance, and the flesh endure alternately the deadening numbness of obstructed circulation, and the tingling pain of inflammatory action, while the limbs seem preternaturally stretched, and every perception confused into indistinct bewilderment—a weariness that it is vain to attempt describing; because those who have not experienced cannot imagine it; and those who have, know it to be indescribable.

What a luxury it would be, even for a few minutes, to lie stretched at full length on that dirty floor; or to take two or three brisk runs from end to end of the narrow room; or to rub the stiffened fingers before the fire which emits no warmth for them, however efficacious it may be for the comfort of Kitty the overlooker, as she seats herself at will right before it, or stirs the sluggish embers into a transient glow? But heat will not long be lacking, for the daylight has declined, and a blaze of gas falls upon the scene, producing a rapid rise in the temperature, accompanied with suffocating smells, and a closeness that operates like a narcotic on the poor children, who, to counteract its effects, gaze into the gas-lights, round which their sleepy eyes picture a circle of diverging rays, and then again experience the increased difficulty of hitting aright the diminutive aperture of the pin-heads, frequently so minute as to be a trial for the strongest sight under the steady beam of noon. The playful-

ness of childhood has utterly disappeared; mischief, before comparatively harmless, as a practical joke, has become the ebullition of quarrelsome ill humour, and the malice of a revenge that would fain wreak itself somewhere; and, being unable to reach the tyrants who provoked it, finds vent on its fellow-sufferers. "Hateful and hating one another," now indeed is shown to be the inbred character of unregenerated mankind; and as that character prematurely unfolds itself under the cruel influences of premature exaction of toil, who does not long to obey the gentle invitation, and ere the heart is utterly hardened, to place these poor little children at the feet of him who says, "Forbid them not to come unto me," though, alas! they have passed too suddenly from the stage of existence to which the sequel was applied; and we are compelled to feel that of such is not the kingdom of heaven.

"Can't you be a little brisker," fearfully whispers Joe Smith to his Irish neighbour, while Mrs. Kitty is known to be taking her tea in the next room, and therefore off her watch; "I'm afraid she'll see you, and be over cross."

"Sorra a bit faster can I move, then, dear. My head's too sore, and it aches so; and my arms drop. I can't stand it."

"Why did you come back?"

"Mother's so sick, and hasn't food to eat."

"Ah, if you've a mother to work for, it's worth bearing a good lot of hardship to help *her*. My poor mammy is dead and gone."

"The heavens be her bed!" ejaculates the good-

natured Irish boy, while his swollen eyes turn compassionately on his little friend.

"Do *you* know where heaven is?" asks Joe, in an almost breathless whisper.

"It's somewhere beyond purgatory; and the souls that the priests get out of that go there."

"Purgatory!" mutters Joe, to whom the word is wholly new; and then, with a timidity that has become a second nature, he shrinks from farther discourse, and pursues his work. But curiosity prevailing again, or rather, solicitude about his lost parent, he soon turns to his comrade, intending to ask another question, and encounters the eye of the master, who has stolen into the room to detect any undue advantage taken of Kitty's absence; and who, catching the little fellow in the very act of addressing the condemned culprit beside him, bestows a pinch on his ear that turns it to purple, while his nail penetrates the tender skin, saying, "You young dog, I'll teach you to choose your company better;" and at the same time commands another boy to change places with him, in order to separate him from one to whom he seems fond.

But this manœuvre has placed Joe so near his little sister, that her heart bounds with joy; and a sly look of gratulation is exchanged between the children. A few minutes, however, bring Kitty back, whose careful eye discovers the new arrangement, and in a moment her hand is on the ragged collar of Joe's little coat, whom she drags back over his seat, and rapping his head with her cane, calls out, "How durst you do such a thing, you impudent jackanapes?"

The boy who had exchanged with him, anxious to escape a similar infliction, eagerly explains how and why it was done; and Joe, instead of being returned to his former station, is put farther than ever from the only two beings who can feel for his desolate condition: all the rest being fully engrossed by their own share of suffering. One short, broken sob is all that escapes the child throughout this double exercise of petty tyranny, which has done service in one or two respects, by changing the course of his perplexing thoughts, and rousing several of the lookers-on from their half-dormant state, thereby saving them from the cane.

But the scene becomes more painful every moment: the unnatural efforts of the poor children to combat at once fatigue, heat, drowsiness, and the exhaustion that fasting brings, superadded to so many hours of unvaried toil, produce among other effects so much awkwardness, so many blunders, and retarding of the work, that neither the scolding tongue nor ever active arm of the woman can keep up with the demands on their continued exercise. She is herself very much tired, heartily sick of her task, and under the influence of something stronger than tea, which she felt it but reasonable to add to that beverage. *She* gains nothing by the additional twenty minutes' toil exacted by the master; it is a prolongation of her own confinement to the spot; and those who are pointed out as its cause must expect to endure a full share of her resentment, along with that of their companions.

"I'll give you a right good milling for this, as soon as I get you outside," muttered a big boy to little Joe

Smith, at the same time suddenly jarring the child's elbow, so as to make him hurt his fingers among the pins; and Joe shrank from him.

"I'll make you head ache for you twice more nor it does now," growled another to the Irish boy, who, looking up sideways in the face of the threatener, replies,

"More power to your elbow, then. Once I'm free to handle my own fists, I'd like to see the fellow that'll touch my head against my will."

"You dirty Irish beggar!"

"You're not over clane for an English one, any how."

"Go it, Bill," "Go it, Jerry," was the encouraging counsel of mischievous neighbours, who felt quite cheered by the prospect of a fight in the street; while a sensible little fellow, scarcely out of petticoats, observes, "I think we get knocks enough in-doors, and might find better fun outside."

But even this excitement presently subsides as the overlooker lounges behind them; and the raps that the cane audibly gives on many a devoted head justify the little boy's remark. Some relieve their minds by a long string of curses deliberately pronounced when the woman is out of hearing; and too often a regular trial ensues of which among the demoralized young creatures shall apply the foulest names, the most dreadful maledictions, to this miserable official. The master comes in for his share, because they often feel his power and willingness to make them smart; and if they look not beyond him — if their eyes penetrate not the decorated walls of mansions where every luxury

is revelled in at their expense, or that of some equally helpless, equally injured class, it is because their knowledge extends no farther than their bodily senses can lead them. There is an eye that looks farther; a hand that, sooner or later, will deal even justice to all: and while such as are wrongfully blamed have the comfort of knowing that "the curse causeless shall not smite," others, who never appear as the direct oppressors of the infant poor, have a lesson to study, which, theoretically or practically, they MUST learn: — "As the partridge sitteth on her eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

The hour-glass has been turned and turned all day long. It is preferred to a clock, and some of the elder children say that they have seen it with the sand fully run out for some minutes before it was turned; and that they would rather have a clock, which goes tick, tick, without any intermission, and cannot count wrong. At home, indeed, from elder people, they hear of hands put back, and clocks regulated to go slow, as occasion may require; but it is all matter of talk — by clock, or by hour-glass, as the progress of either may be interpreted by superior authority, the poor must labour on to the stipulated moment of release.

On the present night there is a press of work in the pin manufactory; and long before the misdemeanor of our young friends settled that point, it had been predicted that the children would not get out at the regular time. No one can tell what amount of suffering is contained in a quarter of an hour's extra work when

eight o'clock has passed. Nature seems just capable of sustaining the effort up to the point to which it is habitually screwed; and then the human machinery stops of its own accord — it can do no more. *Can!* What has can to do with factory toil? *Must* is the word. Ay, they must go on for another twenty minutes, reckoned by the same infallible interpretation of the sand's movement in the glass; and tears are falling down many a babyish face, because of this intolerable strain on weary eyes, this agonizing stretch of overwrought muscles. The twenty minutes are worth a long hour to them; but even they have passed, and forth go the little straggling herd, right out of that heated room into the piercing wind, the cutting frostiness of a sullen November night, in a locality where even frost does not clarify the air, but hangs as it were a sharp edge on a dusky fog. In a moment the skins, still dripping with perspired moisture, pucker into the knotted surface that intense cold produces; a smart is felt about the eyes, too often the precursor of blindness; teeth chatter, and feet stumble in the sudden darkness that succeeds a glare of light; or the feeblest are pushed down by the more strong. Betsy has wrapped up, as well as she can, her shivering little brother, and keeps her arm round his bare neck, where the rough grasp of the woman had torn away the poor remnant of a collar; and the Irish boy, after lingering awhile to ascertain whether his challenger meant to make good his threats, and seeing him scamper off in the direction of a gin-shop, hastens towards the cellar where his sick mother has found a temporary rest, in

the corner spared to her by the hospitality of a countrywoman, a very few degrees richer than herself.

Betsy and Joe proceed to their step-mother's home. The rain that was falling in the morning has continued, with some intermission, through the day, causing every filthy puddle to overflow its regular boundaries; and sending a broad stream of water, thickened by all possible varieties of foul additions, through the gutters that divide the streets into two roughly-paved and unequal portions. Spouts obstructed by long neglect, send their contents dripping and splashing from the eaves of many a house; and between the two, our poor children become thoroughly soaked, even before they can reach the covered passage, the ground under which is one continued pool of dirty water, while beyond it a strong light would scarcely suffice to guard the passenger from frequently slipping ankle-deep into the little pits of mud and slime that break up the path in every direction. Light, however, there is none in this region of wretchedness, save where the red glare of a forge shows the labourers at their night work within, and farther dazzles the bewildered sight of the pedestrian without. Once or twice Betsy has tried to lift her brother over some of the more formidable obstructions, but her stride, so encumbered, falls short of the distance, and she has found her anxiety to protect him only a means of aggravated suffering to both. The intense cold of the all-but frozen element which now steeps the limbs so lately perspiring from artificial heat, produces a sickening sensation ; and they encourage each other with the prospect of a cup of warm

gruel, a huddle in the chimney-corner, and such covering as may remain to their miserable bed after Mrs. Smith and Polly shall have taken what they may want to defend themselves from the cold of that inclement night.

CHAPTER XV.

VICISSITUDES.

One of the most common events that befall the poor is a seizure of the few articles of furniture that they may possess for arrears of rent; and a summary ejectment from the premises occupied. Alice Smith had been very careful to see the landlord regularly paid, while she lived; but her successor took no thought about it. Her husband paid up the first half-year after her death, at the same time that he added several articles (how come by we need not inquire) belonging to the person whom he had married; but no further payment was thought of. Some threats had been uttered, which at last reached the ear of this woman, and the necessity of seriously exerting herself was felt as a most grievous annoyance. The poor children, hastening under the shelter of the roof, are soon made to feel its effects, in reproaches, pushes, and blows; while their humble request for a little supper is treated as an aggravation of her wrongs. After going on for some time venting her ill humour on the weeping creatures, she suddenly turns her attention to a new object, and

commences packing up, in small bundles, the various articles of bedding, and other portable matters; after which she goes out, locking the door, and taking the key.

Hard as their case was, it was not altogether new to the children: they had gone supperless to bed before now, and though the sickness induced by the cold damp is added to that of long fasting, and renders the want of a little warm nourishment more trying, they know there is no remedy. Afraid to go to bed, until the step-mother's return, they roll themselves up in a corner, and after some bitter lamentations about their own mammy, sleep overpowers them. In the same place they awake next morning, wondering to find the room so bare, the bundles all gone, and Mrs. Smith herself busily occupied in preparing their morning mess. They find, too, that they have been allowed to sleep beyond the time, and must run to their work the moment their breakfast is swallowed down. Two thick slices of bread, and a piece of cheese for their dinner, are quickly put into their hands; and they are pushed, not roughly but hastily, from the door, with an injunction to run fast—no easy matter, so much their little limbs are stiffened by the miserable cold of the night, and the incrustations of mud on their feet and apparel.

The day passes as its predecessor did: a like amount of unvaried labour, capricious tyranny, severity, and pain. At night, the two little ones of Alice Smith repair homeward, comforting themselves with the recollection of the comparative attention bestowed on them in the morning, and hoping for a better reception than

on the preceding night; but the door is fast, and a shutter is up against the window, which was never known to be there before; and while they at intervals repeat the humble rap that they are accustomed to give, no answer is returned. A neighbour, however, comes out from her house, and says, "Poor bairns! you may spare your knocking; the landlord's been, and seized the few sticks of things that cunning hussy didn't slip away, and now you may shift for yourselves."

The frightened children stare in her face, not well able to comprehend her meaning; and she adds, "You'd best go at once to the overseer, and he'll take you into the workhouse for the night."

A man who had stopped to listen to her story, moved by the helplessness of the children, observes that they cannot get in at that late hour without somebody to speak for them; and he will go. But on being told to follow, Betsy bursts out crying, and says she is sure if she sits on the step a while, mammy Smith will come home, or else Polly, and let them in.

"Don't be a little fool," says the woman; "but be glad of your luck to have found a friend in need. Neither Polly nor anybody else can get into the house. Go away with you, or you'll have to sleep in the street.

With some difficulty, they are induced to move on; and through the kind persuasions of this strange man, a night's lodging in the workhouse is afforded, till inquiry can be made respecting their step-mother's proceedings. At the same time, a messenger is despatched to caution their employer against paying any part of their wages to the woman who has cast them off—a

measure of no avail now; for she had been there, and by a tale equally false and plausible, had actually won on the under-master to depart from his customary rule, and out of his own pocket to advance several months' wages, on account of the two children, who, ill as they were treated, were secretly admitted to be two of the most punctual attendants, and best workers in the manufactory.

Betsy and Joe have now a new trial to undergo; they must be separated. She is given in charge to a woman for the night, and he turned into the boys' room. A good fire, a fair mess of hot milk and water, with bread and butter to eat, and a merry set of little fellows in the corner assigned to him, presently reconcile Joe to his situation; more especially as he is too sleepy to be able to reflect much. Far otherwise is it with poor Betsy: the sudden rending of every tie is too much for her. Miserable as her home had long been, even before her mother died, still the memory of that mother, particularly in her last illness and death, hung around it; and it seems as if the recent conversations about her with the little boy, had been ordered on purpose to add bitterness to her present grief. Then Joe himself! how *could* they take him from her? Her fancy pictured a thousand wrongs and cruelties inflicted on him, and the idea of never seeing him again took fast hold on her mind. The women in vain offer hot tea and toast: she can only sob and moan, and has not a word to answer either their soothings or reproaches. One woman, who has just lost a little girl of her age, seeing her so filthy and wretchedly clad, resolves to

wash her, and put on some few things that belonged to her child; and while thus employed, she obtains from Betsy a whispered confession that it is after her brother she is fretting so much. The assurance that she will see him in the morning, and go to work with him as usual, tranquilizes her a little; but she is too sick to eat, and a feverish head-ache renders her insensible to the comforts of such a bed as she has not for a long time lain down on.

Here let us pause. What would be the position of this little girl if Christian principles were carried out, or common justice rendered, where the infant poor are concerned? As the child of a village labourer, she would be employed in light field-work, or sewing for the family, or helping her mother in such easy tasks as suited her age and capacity. She would be gratuitously receiving an education to ground her in the principles of Christian faith and knowledge, with the Bible placed in her hands, and all the appointed means of grace within her reach. She would be kept cleanly in person and habits, and taught that female respectability does not depend on wealth or station, but that the humblest of English maidens may establish as strong a claim to it as the proudest peeress in the land. She would be practically learning in early childhood what was to fit her to be the wife, the manager, the mother, in her own humble rank; a comfort and a blessing to all around her, without even taking one step beyond that rank. Her body's growth would be promoted by fresh air and exercise, her mental faculties brought into play, and her habits formed on a model of frugal,

patient diligence in that state of life into which it had pleased God to call her.

But regarding Betsy as an orphan, and in a town, necessarily debarred from many of these advantages, and with no natural friends to provide for her, what, on the same principle of Christianity and justice, would be the difference of her situation from that in which we behold her? She would be the more amply provided with all needful instruction because of having no mother to learn from at home: she would enjoy longer and more frequent opportunities of out-door exercise, because she had farther to go for the freshening air of heaven, which could not visit her in the alley of a town as in a country cottage. She would be the more carefully watched over, in regard to her health, because to her own industry alone she must look forward for support. She would be more diligently instructed in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, because in Him are the fatherless children specially to trust; and because temptations to evil were multiplied around her. Every one would shrink from laying a heavy burden on her, because He has said, whose word never faileth, "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child; if thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." As one who had no parent's helping hand to lean on for future provision, and with three little orphaned companions, younger than herself, who might look at her as their senior, and natural guide, she

would be more perfectly instructed in whatsoever branch of industry promised the best returns for her labour; and care would also be taken to prepare her for the domestic management that might early devolve upon her.

All these particulars combined amount to no more than a simple act of justice, the plain carrying out of a universally recognized principle of Christian duty. It is a duty, too, from which none can plead exemption. The church owes it as an act of obedience to the divine command, "Feed my lambs." Each minister of the church owes it, in his respective sphere, as the fulfilment of his ordination vow; the state owes it, as a minor part of its office, being the appointed minister ordained of God to govern the people righteously — a terror to evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well. The child whose parents neglect it, in matters where it cannot judge for itself, or who are removed by death or absence from their posts, becomes a powerful claimant on the sympathizing help of all who witness its forlorn condition; and howsoever habit, custom, selfishness, blind us to this fact, the claim is registered in the book of God's remembrance, and a strict note taken of the manner in which it is responded to.

Some excellent societies are in operation for promoting education, of a scriptural and industrial character, among the female children of India and the East, the wilds of America, and every quarter of the globe where Christianity is not established. The distinctly avowed purpose of these institutions is to

supply the lack of what we so abundantly enjoy — they are the outgoings of Christian benevolence from an enlightened people to nations who sit in darkness still. Very great is the zeal and very commendable is the diligence evinced by English ladies to promote this work, and to enlist the sympathies of all around them for its extension. Still we must ask, how do these ladies contrive to overlook the objects perishing so near them, and to confine their compassionate cares to others, so very far removed? The misery, the wretchedness, the sufferings, the degradation of young English girls, far exceed those of the little heathen abroad; nor is the foulest system of pagan demoralization, cruelty, and crime, second in atrocity to that which varnishes itself over with the name of Christianity, and seizes for its victims the free-born children of Britain, baptized into a faith of which they live and die in soul-destroying ignorance.

Proceeding on our plan of embodying facts, as they are proved to exist in daily occurrence, we will now return to Betsy Smith — the fictitious representative of a host of real living sufferers, under the dreadful system pursued in all our manufacturing districts. Among the hundreds of poor little children who, for one cause or another, are suffering sickness, but without enjoying, on that account, any exemption from toil, we see this little girl rendered feverish and ill by causes, to the operation of which the majority of her companions are also liable: alternate cold and heat; wet clothes not shifted; exposure in a fasting state to the malaria of a most revoltingly offensive atmosphere, loaded with

putrid effluvia; and the debility consequent on long fasting. The poor inmates of the workhouse ward could not offer much to tempt the sick stomach of an ailing child, though what they could they had done; but in addition to her illness, the poor little creature had to endure great misery of mind. She secretly dreaded that the promise of her brother's restoration to her might not be fulfilled: experience had taught her two facts—one was, that in whatever way an additional penny might be wrung from their premature toil, in that way they would certainly be employed; the other was, that the world contained no human being to whom she might make appeal, or from whom she could hope to gain the smallest alleviation of any hardship allotted to her or to the comrade of her early sorrows. This, preying on a spirit depressed yet more by real illness of body, kept her silent, shrinking, and utterly unable to make any return for the many proffers of kindness, sweetened tea, thinner bread, any even a dust of sugar stealthily strewn over the butter that was scraped upon it, from the private hoard of an old woman, except a faint, "No, thank ye." Some resented this: one called her ungrateful, another, a stupid little fool; a third, proud and fanciful; but the person who had taken charge of her, and cleaned her, still repeated, with a shake of the head, "The bairn is sick."

At last the decisive moment arrives; and Betsy, having received injunctions to repair straight to her place of work, while descending the narrow stone steps that lead to the door, sees the smiling face of

little Joe peeping up from the bottom. The joyous "Ah!" that burst from her pale dry lips, is the first happy tone that had issued from them for a long while; and, hand in hand, the children skip forward, each relating the wonders that had occurred during their long separation, and forming vague guesses as to what had become of mammy Smith, and of Polly. But this was a temporary excitement of mind only; Betsy, on taking her place, feels uncommonly faint and giddy: the machinery appears to move in unwonted confusion, and the occasional hum of voices, whispering in the absence of the overlooker, to form such sounds as she never heard before. But a watchful eye is following the movements of her unsteady hand; and a few raps from the cane, each more severe than its predecessor, admonish her that, well or ill, she is there to labour.

They were ordered to run to the workhouse for their dinner; but before they can proceed many steps a violent fit of shivering obliges the little girl to sit down on a stone, declaring that it will do her more good to rest there than to go to dinner. Joe, hungry, and elated at the prospect of a hot meal, does not require much persuasion to leave her, and she sits wondering, not at being very cold, but at the hot feeling that every now and then shoots over her.

If little Betsy had been born into a gentleman's family, with what anxious care would she now be put into a soft bed; all the curtains drawn, every voice hushed, every foot commanded to fall lightly; the best medical attendance summoned, and, perchance, a kind

mother kneeling beside her downy couch, at once to watch and to pray over the alarming symptoms. Yes, Betsy Smith might have been the very same individual, body, soul, and spirit; of the same age, features, complexion, and feelings — if only her *station* were different, how very different would be her fate! But there is no respect of persons with God; except that with a very peculiarly jealous care he deigns to watch what shall befall the fatherless and poor at the hands of the wealthy.

And what befalls little Betsy Smith, the pin-header! Nothing, as yet. She sits upon the stone, her knees drawn up, and her chin resting on her hands, with a very sick head-ache, and a very vacant look. Nobody minds her: why should they? She has no recognized claim on anybody. A drunken man reels against her, and she falls off, but soon recovers herself, with only a slight sprain of the wrist and bruise on the temple; and when Joe returns, she slides down from her damp seat, walking so unsteadily as to draw on her the jeering rebukes of licentious passers-by, who observes, she is o'er young to be tippling at that time o'day.

Meanwhile, the parish officer has been to the deserted hovel, to the landlord of it, and finally to the pin manufactory. The result of all is, that the woman Smith has outwitted and defrauded every party; and as the master will maintain his right to be repaid out of the children's labour, there is no remedy left for the parish; they must feed and lodge them until the money advanced by the master is earned back; and

then they may hope to send them into the labour market on their own account. The evening of that day is one of agony to poor little Betsy: fits of stupor, from which she is only roused by blows, or by the twitching out her weak flaxen hair, are succeeded by passing moments of positive though silent delirium. Her wild thoughts betray themselves in looks alone, which nobody heeds; and as, at last, she makes her way homewards, Joe can scarcely persuade her that their path lies in a new direction. The bitter night-air brings some refreshment, however; and her sick fancy completely settles on the kind face and soothing voice of the good woman to whom she was returning; with some anticipations of the comfort she shall feel in nestling in that nice bed. She resolves to be very communicative to her new friend; and to look to her as a sort of mother, very different from mammy Smith, though not to be loved like "own mammy."

At the door, however, they are met by one of the porters, who, without any explanation, tells them to "come along!" and going round to another entrance, delivers Joe up to a man smoking near it: then bidding Betsy "move on," makes her walk through a pretty long street, into a very narrow lane, and knocks at a door, which is opened by an aged and not very prepossessing woman.

"You see, missus, the girls' room's full; and this here pauper child must stop with you."

"To be sure: there's lots of room. Go in, child, up them stairs."

This is all the explanation poor Betsy receives of a

change so sudden. She creeps, shivering and gasping, up a sort of a ladder, and finds herself in a long, low-roofed room, very miserable in appearance, but tolerably airy from its size; while grouped in knots are about a score of girls, varying in age, bearing on them the marks of all the dirty occupations in the town; some pressing round a candle's end, examining a farthing print, or other rubbish; all looking miserably poor, ill-fed, and heavy-hearted. Articles in the shape of beds, but as destitute of cleanliness and comfort as could be imagined, mark this long room as a dormitory; but the accommodations are so scanty, compared with the number to be accommodated, that Betsy expects to sleep on the floor, to which she is near falling from exhaustion. However, the old woman comes up, and succeeds in finding a small bed, where only two have a claim, and Betsy is told to make a third. By this time she is nearly insensible, and one of the biggest girls goes to report her case to the "missus," who hobbles up, feels her pulse, looks at her tongue, and pronouncing her to be not bad enough to want the doctor, but in want of medicine, administers a nauseous draught, and bids her lie down.

Too light-headed to comprehend anything clearly, poor Betsy only feels that she cannot sleep; but whether from the ruggedness of the bed, the rapid talking of her companions, or the severe pain in her own bones, she cannot tell. She passes the night in feverish tossings; and in the morning, being wholly unable to rise, she is told to lie still till the doctor calls, on his way to the workhouse. Anxious thoughts of

Joe, and fears for him, oppress her; but all is confused. The doctor pronounces it a feverish cold — very feverish — and she must remain quiet, take another dose, and drink gruel very thin.

She is left quite alone; the very loud noise made by very little children below, convincing her that the old woman is going through the ceremony of pretending to keep a dame school. She is dreadfully thirsty; but in the bustle below the gruel has been forgotten; and she is helpless, till the dinner hour brings home some of the pauper girls, and her parched throat is moistened from the jug of water, that had stood all night far out of her reach, at the utmost end of the room.

Towards dusk she feels considerably better, and asks to sit up, and wants to see her brother. She is told that boys never come there, and it would be of no use inquiring for him. She also learns something of her present situation from a girl who had been at the workhouse during the morning; and who tells her that the way to see Joe again is to get well as fast as she can; that they may go to work together.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SICK PAUPER.

At all times comparatively helpless and dependent, childhood in sickness becomes doubly so; and hardened, indeed, must be the heart that can resist its touching plea for compassion and succour. Yet to this extent is the heart of man, and of woman too, hardened by the all-absorbing principle of selfishness. The hireling who is paid for rendering attentions which are peculiarly the office of a mother, sister, or other near connexion, will too frequently be found faithful in their discharge only so far as the eye of the party holding the purse is upon her, even where the charge is a fondled child of wealth, and the remuneration abundantly large: but in the case of friendless pauper children, for whom a compulsory provision is made by law, and a niggardly allowance is doled out to the grumbling recipient, for undertaking to look after the troublesome brat, what can we expect? The official considers herself ill paid, even for the modicum of attention that she is obliged outwardly to bestow; and the poor aching little head is less likely to be lulled on

its hard pillow by the soothings of kindness, than to be farther racked, and bewildered, and frightened, by noisy outbursts of splenetic ill humour, and complaints of the trouble imposed. The comforts of cleanliness, ventilation, fumigation, cool drinks, and encouragements to sleep, that in other cases are deemed indispensable, must not be dreamed of here. Loud tones, heavy tramping, slamming of doors, and neglect in every possible form, are matters of course. Long sickness in a pauper child is not to be tolerated: if it does not quickly get well, without any fuss being made about it, better it should die and be done with: more will be left than anybody knows how to provide for.

But there is another class from whom little mercy can be hoped: those who having a certain quantity of work to be done, and requiring it to be done within the shortest possible time, at the least possible cost, hire pauper children to do it. These employ two sorts of machinery in their business: one being made of flesh, the other of wood and iron. If a wheel or strap becomes entangled, it is set to rights by the proper workman; if so injured as not to allow of speedy repairing, it is thrown by, and a new one substituted, to avoid any delay. Just so it is with the human department. Why should any difference be made? Why should not a child be worked as long as it can be compelled to go on, with a little occasional quick patching, and when it cannot, be thrown into the street, just as a broken wheel is thrown into the lumber room, to fall to pieces? It is not to be expected that the master's profits of a few hundred or thousands per annum should be de-

creased to the amount, now and then, of one and sixpence, by allowing a little creature, that has worked itself ill in his service, to lie by for a week without forfeiting its eighteen pence; or to retain its claim to readmission on recovery. But add to this the fact, that what the child earns is not at his own disposal, going to remunerate the person who has charge of it, for such food and such clothing as it gets, we may believe the little labourer must be in the position of a shuttlecock, struck alternately from one battledore to the other, until, escaping a stroke, it falls to the ground, and is trampled into kindred dust.

Our little Betsy Smith's situation is that of thousands upon thousands in this land. One parent lost by premature death, through merciless exaction of labour beyond her strength, the other by total desertion, first of his duties, and then of his home. It is a small matter for whom she toils, or who is to deal out to her the very scanty portion of this world's goods that falls to her lot. Under a different system — under the protection of Christian laws, administered in a Christian spirit, — no doubt such helpless beings would find a fitting asylum, where their bodies would be allowed to grow, their minds to expand, their constitutions to acquire some stamina, and their hands to become both active and strong for the various burdens of labour to which, at a proper age, they might be destined. But, alas! as respects the most numerous class of her people, the Christianity of England is a name, and her boasted laws of equal right and privilege are a farce.

Betsy Smith's employer having been cheated out of the price of toil, not yet performed, by the craft of her step-mother, and having had, on the preceding day, a little altercation with the parish authorities, as to their comparative claims on the child's future earnings, in which, with some trouble, he established his own, might naturally look with a suspicious eye on her absence. She was, perhaps, kept away to work for them under pretence of illness; for Joe had been ordered to report her sick. After trying in vain the effect of cross interrogation, enforced with a few heavy blows (for the "question" is sometimes administered in that way without the superintendence of a grand inquisitor,) and ascertaining that the boy really knew nothing more than he had repeated, it was resolved, if she did not appear on the morrow, to send Kitty the overlooker on a mission of inquiry.

This woman, indeed, could have borne testimony that the little girl was so ill on the preceding day, as scarcely to get through her work; and that she had even fallen from her seat through exhaustion; but the temptation of a walk, and a gossip, and a confidential office in the eyes of the workhouse people, more than counterbalanced any inclination to tell the truth, or any compunction for what she was helping to inflict on the innocent boy; especially as no one of the children would dare to volunteer a testimony, so long as she gave none. Accordingly, at noon the next day, Mrs. Kitty put on her bonnet, a warm cloak, and showy apron, and proceeds to investigate the mysteries of the workhouse. She happens to find at the door

the very man who had conducted Betsy to her present abode; and he, unwilling to be kept from his dinner, by starting any difficulties, tells her at once where to find the child; adding, with a wink, "You needn't say who told you."

The female overlooker of the pin-headers is not more willing to pay a gossiping visit than is the old woman at the pauper child's lodging to receive one. They soon become very sociable; and after comparing notes, and relating a variety of concurrent anecdotes, they arrive at the conclusion that there is not upon earth such another set of plagues and torments as beggar-children; nor any class of respectable persons so ill paid and oppressed as those who have the charge of them; whether in a workshop or a domestic institution. Having settled this, and partaken of "something warm," they mount the stairs, enter the long room, and find little Betsy in a sound sleep, flushed, indeed, and breathing painfully, but still in what might be called a luxury of rest, compared with anything she has known for a long while.

"The lazy little hussy!" says Mrs. Kitty, roughly pulling away the clothes that shaded her eyes from the light of an opposite window in that curtainless room, "there's nothing the matter with her, I'll be bound."

The rude jar, the harsh voice, at once wake the child, and to her terrified sight the apparition of her task-mistress, scowling over her, is the signal of something worse than either words or looks. She starts up in her bed, and sits, trembling and panting, with a broad stare fixed on the object of her dread.

"O, you're wonderfully brisk, all on a sudden," remarks the old woman of the house; "a while ago, it was all lack-a-daisy! and you couldn't lift your head from the bolster, not you!"

"It's all a sham," observes Mrs. Kitty, "and she shall smart for it. Indeed she ought to catch it on both sides of her face, for she's deceived you, and robbed us. Only think of our suspecting you of keeping her to work, and whipping her poor little brother for not telling what he didn't know, poor child!"

At hearing this, Betsy bursts into a most piteous cry; her sobs gradually increasing in violence, till she becomes so convulsed as almost to alarm the two women, who stand looking at her and at each other, muttering, "What's to be done?" At this moment, a young lad, the parish doctor's apprentice, who has been sent to call in on the slighter cases among the paupers, and report, but not to interfere farther, runs up the ladder, and exclaims, "Who is in a fit here?"

"It's a fit of passion, sir," answers Kitty.

The young gentleman feels the pulse, and shakes his head. "No, 'tis something serious, and she must be bled: fetch a basin, my good woman." Then, taking out his new case of pocket instruments, he adds, "In such an emergency as this, I must not be too strictly attentive to the letter of my directions, as a life may be lost. However, you need not say anything about it;" looking inquiringly at the old woman, whose grin of acquiescence shows that she will lose nothing by indulging the young practitioner in a trial of his skill on this insignificant pauper child.

But Kitty has more at stake: she is resolved to have Betsy back in the shop, in proof of her own discernment, and to gain some indulgence that she wants, in reward for the good service so discreetly performed. She therefore says, "I beg your pardon, sir, but this girl belongs to us, and is wanted at her work. I'm morally sure she is ailing little or nothing; and I can't agree to her being bled unless the workhouse doctor himself says 'tis needful."

"Well, I'm sure I don't care. The child is ill and unfit to work, but she is in excellent hands here. You may call for a draught in the evening; till then, my good woman, keep her quiet, give her cooling drink, and all that." So saying, he ran off.

"Fine work some of them chaps make among the beggars, trying their hands, when the master is away," says Kitty, "I was sorry to thwart such a nice young gentleman."

"I never do, if I can help it," observes the other. "They are often as clever as their masters, and if they do make a mistake now and then, among people that ain't of no consequence, it helps them to be more skilful and careful when they come to practice openly."

By this time, Betsy had sobbed herself into a state of insensibility, and lay quite still. The old woman threw the bed-clothes over her shoulders again, saying, "There, let her be till morning, and I'll send her off to you in working order."

Night arrives, and a cluster of shivering girls take possession of the cold room. Something has happened to put the old woman out of temper, and their

poor supper is served out with a double allowance of scolding, while an inch only of rushlight is allowed them to take up stairs. The girls who sleep with Betsy are inclined to grumble at the miserable condition of the bed in which she has been tossing all day; but finding her more distressed about it than at her own sufferings, they kindly bid her not to mind.

Having gathered a party about her, Betsy says, "Will you listen to me a bit? I'd a own mammy not long ago; and she died, and I think I'm going to die too; and I want to know where mammy is gone to, now she's dead; so can you tell me?"

Various replies were given. One said, "I suppose she went into the grave." Another, "When a body dies, there's an end of 'em — the worms eat 'em up." A third remarked, "I never heard such a rum speech." And a fourth, "Ghostesses is dead people: they come up, whiles, and walk, and frighten folk."

This draws the whole party instinctively together; particularly as the last ray of light is glimmering in the dirty socket. It expires; but immediately a cloud that had obscured the full moon also passes away, and from a sky of the deepest blue that beauteous orb looks out, displaying its broad clear disc directly opposite the window, and throwing a stream of light upon the bed and the group who cower and crowd about it. The sight seems to revive in Betsy's mind some long dormant recollection.

"I know," she says, "there's more in it than that. I used to pray some pretty prayers once, and I wish I could remember them now. Do any of you know any prayers?"

"O yes," was the answer of several voices, while some laughed; and a fair little girl half whispers, "I very often say, 'Our Father!'"

"That's it!" cries Betsy: "say it now, will you, dear!"

The child settles her face to a serious look, joins her hands, bends her knees against the side of the bed, and devoutly repeats the words, "Our Father!"

"Go on," says Betsy.

"That's all: I don't know no more." And several of the girls agreed that they used the same form of prayer, consisting of the same two words, and no more.

"Yes, there *is* more," exclaimed the sick child: "Our Father—our Father *which art in heaven*,—that's it! that's it! and there's more too, if I could remember it."

"It isn't true, if I said it," remarks one of the girls; "my father ain't in heaven, he's in prison, and going to be transported."

"My own mammy is in heaven, though," says Betsy, "and I want to go too, but I can't find out anything about it. O who," she adds, in the most touching tone of entreaty, "who will tell me and Joey something about heaven?"

Poor child! there are many daily passing you by in the street, who could both tell you, and instruct you in the only way to that blessed place. But their thoughts are otherwise engaged; their zeal has more distant

objects; and for allowing *you* to perish in ignorance they must answer to Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XVII.

AUTHENTICATIONS.

"If all this were true, it would be frightful; but it is a mere story of the imagination, to be received with due allowance for the writer's exaggerating fancy." To obviate such remark, we are bound now to adduce a few statements of facts which have appeared in the best authenticated form. We will first quote from the report of Mr. Grainger, and evidence collected by him on a spot where such things do not even wear so bad an aspect as elsewhere they are known to do. He thus speaks of the pin-headers:—

"The work in which they are engaged being entirely of a sedentary and monotonous character, affords none of those changes of occupation and position which in the case of most other pursuits allow the children a certain degree of relaxation and exercise. At this kind of irksome work, the children, many of whom are of a most tender age, seven or eight years, are kept without any relaxation for twelve or thirteen hours, out of which but one hour, or a little more, is allowed for meals. . . . A fraud is in some cases

committed, by which these poor children are made to continue a quarter of an hour longer at their work at night, when, being already exhausted, they feel severely any addition to their labour; for this overwork they receive no remuneration, but are at this time frequently punished. Whilst at work, the overlooker is constantly watching them, and the least relaxation is punished with the cane; towards evening, this is particularly the case, and the children were often heard crying by the porter."

Here we will give a few extracts from the evidence actually rendered. One of the "*masters*" makes these admissions: — "the children are left entirely to his care: the proprietor does not at all interfere in the management of them. Thinks the workshop is too dark, too small, and too close for fifty-one persons to inhabit from eight in the morning till seven in the evening. No other means than the fire are taken to ventilate the shop: the windows are not set open at night, or in the morning before work. 'Indeed there is no need, as there are plenty of broken panes.' The windows are capable of being opened. In the sharp winter weather, the children are cold at their work; and at night, when the candles are lighted, the shop gets very warm. There is no place for the children to wash after work. There is no proper provision made for the children as to out-houses — that place is not in a fit state for any one to enter. Many of the children have not sufficient food or clothes. Does not make any provision for those children who come without their dinner. Cases have occurred of children staying from

eight in the morning till seven at night without having food. The children generally are at task-work; if this is not done, they are corrected. Those who work at this trade learn nothing which is useful to them as mechanics. . . . Thinks the children are occasionally neglected by their parents. No care is taken by the witness or the proprietor to improve their condition."

So much was admitted by the very person, who, by his own account, had fifty-one of these little labourers under his own sole, irresponsible charge. If they failed of their exact task, he says, "They are corrected." How corrected they may be, or have been, we proceed to show. The following is the evidence of a respectable, well-informed woman, who had been eleven years at work in the different branches.

"Towards the evening the children are both tired and hungry, theirs being 'very hungry work.' They are in the evening, as in the day, kept at their work by the cane; they require a great deal of caning; some of them, not being able to stand the work, run away. Some of these will come back, and stand at the entry of the manufactory, and the master seeing them, will bring them into the shop. On these occasions they are sometimes beaten. A former overlooker of this manufactory, Satchwell by name, has taken witness, then a child, by the hair, and beat her with his fists on the head. This man did not use a cane, but a strap; has seen him fetch blood 'by using weapons,' such as a file, or anything that came near him. Has herself many times been beaten till the blood came. . . The mothers of the children have often taken out a sum-

mons against this man, but he was never taken before a magistrate for this offence, having compromised the charge by giving money to the mothers!! Her own mother took out a summons, for cutting her head open with a pin-tray. At present the children are corrected on the back with a cane."

Another young woman, who had worked at the pin-heading thirteen years, heard this evidence, and fully confirmed it; adding that she had herself been beaten by Satchwell, so that the blood ran down her back. "On one occasion, when he was beating her over the head, a long pin-shank was driven into the skin so deeply that the pincers were used to extract it. Thinks that Bramer, another master here, was worse than Satchwell; he was a very savage person, and beat the little children, boys and girls, as much as the larger ones."

Another witness, the wife of a police constable, was formerly overlooker in a pin manufactory. She adds fresh testimony to the savage cruelty of Satchwell and Bramer. She also states, "If the worker asked for it, a certain number of pins were weighed out in proportion to the wages. If, after this, the pins were not finished in the usual hours of work, the child was kept extra time, till eight P. M., and also at the dinner hour, till the lost work was made up. It occasionally happened that the children were set more work than they could perform; they were sometimes beaten for this. Children often complained of cold, the shop being long, and there being only one small fire-place. Has known the children to be so cold that they would

not do more than three days' work in the week. Headers often came without their breakfast, and knows that many of them were often all day in the shop without food, especially on the Saturday, when they always staid from eight A. M. till five P. M. No time on the Saturdays allowed for dinner; all the years witness was at the manufactory. Children on this day were frequently detained till eight P. M. for their wages; they were never paid before seven."

With regard to one particular part of the premises, which was unavoidably frequented by some fifty boys and girls every day, the female overlooker used the words: "It is not in a fit state for any human being to go into; it is not in a fit state for dogs to enter."

Mr. Grainger says, that, "Most of them were pale and sickly-looking; they generally were more or less in rags, or without shoes or stockings: many of them complained of want of food. . . . A custom prevails of the master lending money to the parents, which is repaid out of the labour of their children. One of these masters states, that in most weeks he lends money to the parents — that this is regularly done — that most parents are always in debt — and that the children are kept to work out the debt of their parents. The same witness further states, that it is common for parents to hire their children as headers usually for twelve months, or rather 'it is common to make the hiring for three years.' No similar instances came under my notice in other trades. Considering that so many very young children are employed in these establishments, it might have been reasonably ex-

pected that the principals, who derive the benefit of their labour, would have felt a moral obligation to afford them efficient protection; such, however, is not the case; one proprietor 'does not in any way interfere with the shop, except as regards the quality of the work.' At another manufactory, where the most severe cruelty took place, the principals did not interfere effectively to prevent the ill treatment. In the whole of my inquiries," concludes Mr. Grainger, "I have met with no class more urgently requiring legislative protection than the unhappy pin-headers."[1]

Legislative protection, however, appears as far off as when the sufferings of these poor little creatures were first brought before the public eye: so recently as the 30th of August last, the following fact was stated, by unquestionable authority, in Manchester, respecting the increased labour which factory children had to sustain in the mills: "The velocity of the machinery has been increased fourfold since 1819; and the child who had then to walk eight miles a day, has now to travel thirty-two!"

But another point brought forward in our preceding pages must also be established. We refer to the utterly incredible extent of ignorance prevailing not only in the heart of an English town, but among children who actually, and for a prolonged period, have attended Sunday schools. This is really the most fearful branch of the subject; we must give the evidence as it appears on the face of the reports themselves.

Mary Field, aged between ten and eleven, was at a

day school "about six months, every day; went to a Sunday school besides; can use a needle; could not hem a handkerchief, nor darn a stocking; could not put a patch upon a hole in her clothes. Never heard of another world, nor of heaven, nor of another life; has looked up at the stars very often; thinks there's a good many on 'em; that's all she ever thought, looking at 'em."

A boy of fourteen, able to read, and having been regularly at a Sunday school for three years, states, that "he has never heard of St. Paul or St. Peter; has heard of Adam — he was the first-born son. Has heard of Jesus Christ — he was an angel in heaven."

John Wood, aged nearly eighteen, who could read easy words, deposed that he "never heard of St. Paul, or St. John the Baptist; never heard of king Herod. Has heard of Jesus Christ, the Saviour's Lord's Son."

Walter Brindly, aged seventeen, having attended various Sunday schools for *seven years*, and able to read easy words of one syllable, "has heard of the apostles; does not know if St. Peter was one, or if St. John was one, unless it was St. John Wesley; does not know anything about Job; never heard of Samson — knows about Jack Sheppard."

Stephen Hart, aged seventeen, "knows his letters; never heard of the twelve apostles; never heard of Solomon, nor Job, nor Samson; has heard of Pontius Pilate; thinks he was one of the twelve apostles; thinks he has heard that read at the free school."

Another boy, of the same age, who had attended a Sunday school regularly for five years, "does not

know who Jesus Christ was, but has heard the name of it. Never heard of the twelve apostles," &c.

William Southern, also aged seventeen, able to read, and having regularly attended Sunday school for nearly six years, "knows who Jesus Christ was, he died on the cross to shed his blood to save our Saviour. Never heard of St. Peter or St. Paul."

Another, nineteen years old, regularly attending a Sunday school for five years, says, "there were twelve apostles; St. Peter was one, Moses was another, Jonah was another, Job was another; cannot mention any more that he recollects."

Henry Ward, near seventeen, from the workhouse at Birmingham, able to read a little in the Testament: "Does not know how many disciples there were; does not know who Jesus Christ was — thinks he was an apostle; they don't learn the catechism here, else he could tell about him, but thinks he was a king of some kind, of London, a long time ago."

Eliza Baff, aged fifteen: "Never heard of Jesus Christ; never heard the name; never heard of our Saviour; never says any prayers; does not know one."

The following answers were taken from pupils in various Sunday schools; that is to say, during the hours of their attendance there, and upon the very spot.

George Canser, age above sixteen, had regularly attended a Sunday school upwards of four years, and able to write a little, said, "There were twelve apostles; thinks Adam was one, and Eve two; and

Jesus Christ was another. Cannot recollect any more."

Samuel R. Horton, near twelve, "Cannot read, only in the sixpenny book. Is not afraid of any boy or man either. Thinks he *is* of the devil, but not particularly."

These are painful exposures indeed; but where lies the fault? The teachers, often willing and always gratuitous teachers, are themselves frequently but very little advanced in knowledge beyond their pupils; and wholly unable to command the attention of such a wild, unruly, over-worked, burdened, or stultified little crowd of noisy children, assembled in a close room, and longing to be at full liberty again. View it as we may, in its origin, its present aspect, or its future results, it is a most appalling spectacle for the eye of a Christian to rest on; and one for the continuance of which no English Christian can render a satisfactory account to his God. One more particular must be stated, in the words of Mr. Horne, who collected the foregoing and a vast number of similar evidence. "Many of the children told me they always said their prayers at night, and the prayer they said was 'Our Father.' I naturally thought they meant that they repeated the Lord's Prayer, but I soon found that few of them knew it. They only repeated the two first words: they knew no more than 'Our Father.' These poor children, after their laborious day's work, lying down to sleep with this simple appeal, seemed to me inexpressibly affecting. Having nothing but harsh task-masters in this world, or, 'working under their

father,' it was probably the only true sense in which they could use the words."

But, ignorant as these miserable little slaves were proved to be of all that related to holiness, all that belongs unto their peace, it was too plain that they were wise concerning evil. Cursing and blasphemy abounded among them, and they were almost universally found to be acquainted with the names and histories of Jack Sheppard, Dick Turpin, and other felons, whose vile courses have been recorded in popular story-books, for the emolument of two or three individuals—the hopeless perdition of thousands. Of the Eternal Father and his holy law, of Jesus Christ and his blessed gospel, of the divine Spirit and his renewing, guiding influences, they know nothing: the words in which they were interrogated concerning them appear scarcely to have conveyed a meaning to the minds of these wretched children, or of the more advanced youths whose long attendance on what are called schools might have led us to expect a far higher degree of information than could be looked for among the former class; but that they were capable of receiving and retaining any information in which they could be induced to take an interest was manifested by their replies when questioned concerning the infamous characters who had perished on the gibbet. Scarcely one of them knew the queen's name, or who or what she might be, or where she dwelt; but with 'Jim Crow' they were all familiarly acquainted, brightening up at the name. To infer from the replies noted down, of which the above are but a very scanty speci-

men, that the mental faculties of these young victims to the demon of covetousness were indeed an utter blank, and their intellectual perceptions lost in idiocy through the operation of such destructive causes, would indeed furnish another, and a tremendous count, in the indictment against their task-masters; but it would not be capable of sustaining proof while the facts just noticed stood recorded to show the retentive and reflective powers engaged by themes of viciously exciting interest. No, the crime committed is that, the very first and faintest approach to which was so severely rebuked by the Lord — his nominal disciples place a barrier between Him and the little children. What object can they have in so doing?

The matter is plain enough. In the first place, they do not themselves serve God whose hearts are set on the accumulation of worldly wealth. They do not — they cannot. The declaration stands indelibly engraven where it can neither be erased, nor hidden, nor misunderstood: "No man can serve two masters... YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON." They have no agreement whatever with heavenly things; it is impossible that they should have; for thus again saith the imperishable word: "Covetousness is idolatry;" to believers it says, "Ye are the temple of the living God;" and "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" Not only does the grasping worldling decline to serve God, and cut himself off from any agreement with Him, but he shuns and hates the truth. "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be

reproved." But are we authorised to point to any man or body of men, and judge them to lie under such fearful condemnation as this? We do and must apply it to all who voluntarily, deliberately, and publicly exhibit themselves, before the whole world, in the character of men so greedy of gain as to sacrifice to its acquisition the bodies and the souls of their fellow-creatures. If any man considers himself aggrieved by having such a stigma affixed to his name, the remedy is within his reach—let him cast it off; let him begin to do justly, and to love mercy; to care for the poor, and to render unto all their dues—not excluding from that comprehensive ALL the humble beings by whose toilsome services he is enabled to meet every other demand on his probity.

There is no department of labour now filled by children which could not be occupied by adults; there is no task in any department so heavy that it might not be lightened by reasonable subdivision. Supposing that the business is such as to make it easy work to a child, and at the same time gainful to the parents, what a change might be wrought in the whole scene, what a blessing shared by all parties, if even the wish existed to deal out a common measure of justice to those whom God had made dependent on their wealthier brethren! We will suppose a case in this very department of pin-heading: what is to prevent a proprietor who might choose to furnish a good-sized, airy room, with all the needful implements of the business, and a duly qualified person to act as instructer in the first rudiments of education, placed

either in that or in an adjoining apartment, so as to combine teaching with manual labour, as is done, in fact, in all our girls' schools, where sewing in its different branches constitutes a great part of the daily routine. Let us but imagine such a provision made, with just so many more children admitted than might be required to fill the working seats as to allow of relays, however small; each party going up in turn to the teacher, to read, to spell, to receive a lesson for the next half hour's conning, while engaged at the pins; let us suppose a decent amount of personal cleanliness enforced, and means to ensure it supplied, as in all schools; let us take it for granted that the confinement would not be prolonged beyond what childhood can well support, and a fair remuneration given, after deducting, if so it must be, a portion for the attendant expenses — and under how new an aspect would even infant labour appear to us?

Is this impracticable? Must the whole creature, body and mind, be engrossed by the employment for which the child is hired? Must that employment be so protracted, and the confinement so unbroken, and the restraint so complete, and the discipline so severe, as we now behold them? Then the continued existence of such a system is a crime against God and our brethren; one that cannot fail to bring down a punishment as lasting as are the effects of that crime — as lasting as are the woes of immortal beings who close a life of sin by a death of impenitence and despair. Will God become a liar to accommodate the speculatists in a commercial market? Will He set aside both

his law and his gospel, to abet the very deeds that, alike under both, He has vowed to punish in the sight of all men? Will He cease to be the Judge of the widow, the Father of the fatherless, the God of the poor, because Messrs. So-and-so could not increase their capital at the present ratio, and prosper according to their wish, unless it were so? No person can be mad enough to calculate thus; and if not, what remains? "Go to now, ye rich men, howl and weep."

But perhaps these employers will not admit that they are rich: they gain only a moderate competence by their traffic in infant flesh, and sinew, and health, and mind, and soul. Their losses in trade are frequent and severe; their profits doubtful and inadequate; they often question whether they shall realize a decent provision for their own children; and therefore they will not plead guilty to the charge of enriching themselves by unlawful or cruel means. So long as unlawful and cruel means are used, the Judge of all the world will not inspect their balance-sheet, nor overhaul their ledgers, preparatory to passing sentence. Whether the employer is compelled to walk afoot, or whether he splashes about with his chariot wheels the mud through which his poor little baby-labourers crowd to their miserable homes, they and their sufferings, not the amount of wealth that he may wring out of them, must be the theme when the great day of reckoning comes. Oh that, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we could persuade men to consider what refuge they have to flee to, when the world and all its wretched baits disappear from before them, and they are compelled to

know that He who is the Truth lied not, when he said, in reference to the Scriptures which reveal his will to man, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Not long ago, a gleam of hope dawned on the region of darkness and the shadow of death. The British legislature was roused to a sense of its duty, and provision was made for a supply of educational aid, where the lack of it sends up a continual cry of accusation to heaven. We enter not into the particulars of its failure: every man must give an account of himself to God, and there is a fearful item standing against some men in this matter. It has pleased God to rouse the hearts of many individuals to effect by a combined effort what the government failed of accomplishing; and if these humble but truthful pages may help to warm one heart, to strengthen one hand, to encourage one benevolent mind in a work so sacred, it will be a crown of rejoicing to her who has penned them; and who, in the absence of other means to help it forward, would fain feel that, in thus using the one talent committed to her, "she hath done what she could."

CHAPTER XVIII.

LACE MANUFACTURE.

WHO shall plead the cause of the poor? The question forces itself upon us as though it were unanswerable, when we look round and behold the multifarious forms in which oppression causes the land to mourn. The whole land, we repeat, mourns: covetousness smites the poor with a direct stroke, but the recoil upon itself is scarcely less grievous. Those who place their happiness in this world's good, and who, to increase their portion, readily avail themselves of such means as the ways and the maxims of this world sanction, are self-doomed to the greatest curse that can befall an accountable being. There is in the word of God a precept, bearing all the weight of a direct command, seeing that it is spoken by a divinely inspired teacher—one of those concerning whom the Lord solemnly declared, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me;" when we recite that command, the heart's natural response will be, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"

Nevertheless, we shall adduce it. "HAVING FOOD AND RAIMENT, LET US BE THEREWITH CONTENT." It is quite obvious that herein is fairly included whatever man can reasonably demand for the daily sustenance of his body, its suitable clothing, and habitation, and whatever is found really conducive to health; neither does it require us to reject such additional advantages as in the course of God's providential dealings, may fall to our lot; but it utterly prohibits a movement of discontent so long as we are supplied with the actual necessaries of life; and it renders unlawful that craving after more which leads a person on in pursuit of something better, something more abundant in the way of selfish gratification, than he already enjoys in the full supply of all that nature craves. The whole passage is confirmatory of this. The apostle had been directing his fellow-helper, Timothy, to withdraw himself from perverse and corrupt disputers, one of whose errors consisted in supposing that gain was godliness: he goes on, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Now let us for a moment contemplate one mesh of

this great snare; and see how it is constructed to produce the most melancholy results, to inflict the most cruel sufferings on one class of our fellow-creatures, while heaping on others an accumulation of responsibility that it is fearful to think of. There is an article of female attire, not, like the pin, necessary and of universal adoption, but elegant, tasteful, becoming, and very generally sought after. Of this, some kinds are so costly as to be only within the reach of the most affluent; and, until of late years, our home manufacture could not produce a fabric to compete with the foreign produce, neither can we now equal it. However, this being so promising a speculation, great efforts have been made by men who possessed capital for present outlay; and the lace trade employs an immense number of female hands in constant occupation to supply a market that numbers among its customers, in one branch or another, every grade of society, from the Queen upon the throne to the village bar-maid, who cannot serve beer out to her master's customers without a bit of edging to her simple cap.

So far, all is very fair; that any produce of honest industry should find so ready a sale, and that our own poor should enjoy the profit rather than foreigners, is a matter of thankfulness. They, the labourers in this craft, might thereby obtain "food and raiment" with which they would be content, and glad. Their employers might make a fair, though moderate profit, and enjoy through it the greater comforts and advantages to which they have been accustomed; while the tradesman who retails the article would secure his

reasonable profits also; and the purchaser of what is, under all circumstances, an addition to her necessaries—in other words, a luxury, must be content by giving a good price to remunerate all these agents for its supply. We find, accordingly, that the shopkeeper never fails to secure his portion; he charges as high a price as, in the midst of competition, he can venture to do; but that competition being extensive and brisk, he cannot grasp so much as he would do if the market were less amply supplied. Still he will not lose; he gives such a price for it as will compensate him, and the manufacturer must take what the tradesman will give.

The manufacturer has then to balance what he gets from the retailer with what he has paid, or must pay, for the raw material, and wages of those who have wrought it into its present form; and the cost of machinery employed, so far as machinery can be made to go towards doing work for which otherwise the poor must be paid. He buys an immense supply of the article, to answer any sudden demand, and lest any brother in the business should profit by it instead of himself. Accordingly he has many hands at work, among a class who do literally depend for their daily share of the coarsest food, the scantiest raiment, the most miserable shelter, on the daily toil of their own hands; and these being wholly at his mercy, he throws the whole burden upon them. They have no other resource; they can turn to no other quarter for help; they have learnt the business, and however willing, however able to undertake any other branch

of industry, they have not a friend in the world to put them in the way of so doing. Moreover, the number of applicants for employment is so large, and the destitution of such as cannot procure any is so fearful, that they dare not, even for a day, relinquish their posts, which hundreds would rush forward to secure, closing the way against their return, if, for the pursuit of another object, or for a little season of rest, they left them unoccupied. They are fettered by their helpless condition not less strongly than is the galley-slave by his iron chain; and they *must* toil on.

In sketching out a supposed village community, to which the Kings and the Smiths originally belonged, we named a widower, Tom Clarke, as being on the look-out for employment for his four daughters, of whom he designed the eldest for service, and the rest for such work as he could find. We will take Kate Clarke to a place recommended by somebody who stopped at the old inn where Tom still loitered; and who, having ascertained that there were more hands than occupations in his family, drew a very flattering picture of the lace-making districts, and of one in particular. One or two suspicious people, indeed, cautioned Clarke; telling him that it was a lure — that the traveller had been asking questions which showed some ulterior object, and that there were agents known to be on the look-out to tempt into these districts such persons as, when once there, were not likely to be able to return, and who must therefore work for such pay as they could get, being even more destitute and helpless than those be-

longing to the parishes in which they resided. To all this, Tom turned a deaf ear: he had a great dislike to factories, and other places of imprisonment, as he called it; his own out-door life, and the habits of his family, tended to strengthen the feeling; and as the traveller assured him that the persons of whom he spoke all worked independently at their own cottages, and that he might easily get his daughter received into one of these families, as a domestic helper, filling up her spare time with the beautiful work of lace-making, it seemed both to him and the girls such a splendid opening, that he was prevailed on to promise them all a share in the advantages, as soon as Kate had settled herself there.

Before accompanying this new adventurer in her promising career, it may be well to bring our readers somewhat acquainted with the various branches and peculiarities of the lace-making trade. The manufacture of the main fabric is carried on by machinery, varying in some points. The machines that are worked by hand are sometimes used singly, in separate houses, but more frequently a small number are worked together in a house; while, in a few cases, they are placed together in factories, to the number even of fifty. The main work is laborious, increasing in difficulty when the machine is wider than the common carriage, and requiring the strength of a man to keep it in action. In some very wide machines, there is occasion for two, or even three men, unless a wheel is used, and then children, generally young boys, are employed to attend to the wheels. The work is carried on, very

frequently, twenty out of the twenty-four hours; and the labourers of all ages are consequently liable to be called for at all times of the day and night. It is usual, towards the end of the week, to keep it on during the whole night, to make up for time lost in the early part by idleness and debauchery. Of course, whenever the workmen choose to be at the business, all the junior hands must be there also.

The machines propelled by steam-power cannot be thus worked at will, but must be attended to incessantly, while the engines are going. But this usually commences at four in the morning, and continues till twelve at night, making twenty hours of regular work. The work stops at eight on the Saturday, but in many instances they keep it up through the whole of Friday night, to make good the four hours so lost. It is not uncommon in some factories to go on throughout the whole twenty-four hours, allowing one hour for cleansing the engine and machinery. Two sets of men or lads are employed in such cases, each party taking five or six hours at once, called a "shift;" and thus every one has ten or twelve hours' work *per diem*.

The machines are very perfect, making the lace by their own action, but requiring such incessant, watchful care, such a sharp eye kept constantly upon the whole surface of the web to detect and to rectify any blemish or irregularity, that it is beyond any similar employment trying and injurious to the sight; so that at forty, very few indeed can carry it on without the aid of spectacles. This particular mischief belongs to

the process in all its branches, the winding, threading, mending, running, drawing, &c., as will be seen by a little further description.

Winding consists in winding into the brass bobbins the necessary quantity of thread to make a piece of lace: it is done by young women, requires great care, and, from the delicacy of the material used, and the continued fixing of the eyes on the metal to which it must be adjusted, the sight is strained, weakened, and permanently injured; though by no means to such an extent as in the next department.

Threading consists in passing the end of the thread, wound as above, through an aperture often no larger than the eye of a needle, in order that it may be properly spread and woven on the machine. This is the sole occupation of the threaders during the day and night, and the fatigue both of limb and eye is overpowering. There never are relays, or sets, or "shifts" of threaders: the poor children must work as long as they are wanted; they must, even during the intervals, remain at hand to be ready for the next summons; and no provision is ever made, by mattrass, blanket, or any accommodation of any kind whatever, for their obtaining rest during the hours of the night, when they may be spared to snatch a little sleep. Like dogs, they crouch on the ground, in any corner where they can do so without being walked over; and in no department of labour is more hardship endured than that sustained by the poor threaders, who are very generally, almost universally, boys, and who begin before they are nine years old. If at home, they are sent for at one, two,

three, or four in the morning, as occasion may be; and kept till eleven, twelve, or one at night. Their meals are as irregular as their rest, no time being fixed for them; and the consequence of such uncertainty in eating is most injurious. So far, the business is carried on by those three classes, i. e. men to work the machines, young women to wind, and young boys as threaders, wherever the machinery may be: the rest of the business belongs to another class of operations.

Drawing consists in pulling out with a needle the threads that join the widths of lace in one broad piece when they come from the manufactory. How, and by whom this is accomplished, we shall see by and by. *Running*, *hemming*, *pearling*, as well as *mending*, are done by the needle, and may be said to employ nearly the whole female population of the places where the business is carried on. The enormous price of machines, often becoming useless when fitted up at an expense of some hundreds of pounds, by a sudden change in the fashion which renders that particular pattern of no value, entails a frequent loss on the proprietor; and this forms the general excuse for all hardships imposed on the dependent poor, applying themselves and their children — shall we not rather say, applying themselves and sacrificing their children? — without intermission to a most destructive employment during the livelong day and not a small part of the night, for a pittance that will scarcely purchase for them a sufficiency of bread.

When Kate Clarke arrives at her destination, she finds it is a cottage consisting of two rooms: that on the

ground floor extending the whole length and width of the building, but very low in proportion, while the chamber, or rather loft above it, following the form of the roof, slants off, so that it is only in the middle a person of common stature may comfortably stand upright. Here she sees a couple of coarse palliasses, laid on the ground, with a little bedding to each, and all the remaining space cumbered with old boxes, and different tools belonging to the trade at which the master of the house works as a journeyman; while in the apartment below, a turn-up bedstead leans against the wall, to make room for a deal table; and a number of small frames are wedged close together, the exact purpose of which she does not yet comprehend. The wagon by which her father brought her hither completed its slow progress on the Sunday afternoon, and no work is done. The man and his wife, both quiet, dull sort of people, and their five or six children, excite no particular interest in the mind of their new inmate, which is by no means of an intellectual order; but she takes a fancy to the youngest, a lovely little girl, under three years old, pale and delicate, yet with more vivacity in her looks than any other of the family, in whom Kate hopes to find a merry companion, when running out on messages, and doing the household work. The child seems no less taken with Kate's round rosy face, her staring blue eyes, and rather unmeaning, but very good-natured grin, and her evident inclination to be on the move. Mrs. Collins gives herself little concern as to the appearance or temper of her new domestic, nor does she seem to require her help

in household matters, to which she attends, mechanically enough, herself. Some linen lying to soak in a large red pan at the farther end of the room, proves that she had been recently washing, to which her hands and arms also bear testimony; and she seems to be a woman who has no notion of idleness, nor any greater regard for the hallowed season of rest than poor Kate herself has been brought up to bestow upon it. For though the village was well ordered, and its national and Sunday schools open to all who chose to attend, the ruinous habit of hanging about an inn yard to stare at Sunday comers, had estranged the hostler's family no less than himself, from the house of God, and from all means of grace and instruction: so that the breach of the Sabbath was to them a congenial practice.

The principal object of Mrs. Collins' attention seemed to be a rather large but light package, loosely done up, from which she occasionally drew forth a corner of what appeared to Kate the most costly article she had ever seen, being fine as a cobweb; and which she rightly conjectured to be lace received from the factory. The children, on the contrary, eye it askance and with unfriendly looks: except the boy, seemingly about nine years old, who is absorbed in a game of dibs, near the doorway, while the little one, whom they call Sally, picks up the bones as they roll down, and jumping and laughing restores them to him. A piece of pork, brought by the villagers as a gift, having been boiled for supper, they all set down to it, with appetites that seem to have been sharpened by previous absti-

nence; and Tom Clarke, highly satisfied with his daughter's prospects, takes a cordial leave of her and her employers, pausing at the door, to observe, with a triumphant snap of the fingers, "'They sha'n't have it to say of me as they do of John Smith, that he made slaves of his children. I know better than to put mine in a factory prison. No, no; 'Home, sweet home' for me;" and he departs, whistling the tune of that favourite strain.

But in whatever visions of freedom an Englishman who has been taught from the cradle that his house is his castle, and that no tyranny can violate the sacred barrier of his humble threshold, may indulge in connexion with that hallowed domicil, there is a tyranny which enters unresisted to lay the most galling of fetters upon his household group, and to grind them into the dust. What is the precise nature of that tyranny it may be hard to decide: that is an invited chain, voluntarily assumed, yea, contended for by the inmates of many an Englishman's castle, is undeniable; yet no man can look at the victims, and surmise that the circumstances under which they sought the oppressive yoke were other than sternly compulsory.

The only explanation that can be given of this system of inflicted and invited wrong, is the fact that, in the desperate spirit of speculation, commercial men will set no limits to the production of what they may possibly sell, to the farther increase of their growing capital; and that in the struggle for means to live by the very scanty portion of this accumulated wealth which is allowed to circulate among them, the really

destitute class are as little disposed to reject the most inadequate remuneration for their heavy toil; thus at once glutting the market with labourers, and keeping down the price of work, so that those who are not yet quite destitute must submit to the same scale of wages, the same pressure of immoderate task-work, in order to secure a resource, however miserable, when what little they may have shall melt away. To this also we must attribute the pernicious plan of still tempting more adventurers into the manufacturing from the agricultural districts; because the greater the competition among the wretched, who *must* find employment or starve, the more free are those who employ them to impose hard terms; and upon the noble principle that "a penny saved is a penny got," to swell their deposits, and enlarge their outlay with the gain thus "saved" from the pining, famished stomachs of the poor.

CHAPTER XIX.

EMBROIDERING.

Kate has nestled, during the night, on one of the mattrasses with two of the young Collins; the other is shared between the third girl and a young woman, a winder at the nearest factory, who pays by the night, when she can come, for her lodging; little Sally, with her parents, occupying the bedstead below: and as for the boy, he was ordered to be at his work by two, and only laid down on a heap of clothes in the warmest corner of the apartment. At four the bustle occasioned by the winder hurrying off to her business, effectually rouses Kate; who hears her master go out before five to his jobs among damaged machinery, or the construction of new articles. The whole family are now astir, and Kate expects to enter upon a bustling day's work; but on descending into the principal room, she sees her mistress turn up the bed, just as it had been slept in, stuff behind its frame all the clothes and other things that had been lying about, without the slightest attempt at folding them up, or any other

idea, apparently, than that of getting them out of the way; and then set the various "stands," to which frames were attached for running, each over against a chair, or stool, or short bench that extended before two of them. This done, she bids Kate set the kettle, which one of the girls has just filled at a neighbouring pump, upon the fire, now beginning to rise, and then to wash her hands and come to work.

This washing of hands is carefully attended to by all, but the ablutions proceed little farther; clean faces do not seem to be thought much of, though little Sally holds hers up, with a petitioning look to her mother, who just rubs it over with the damp towel on which she has wiped her own hands. Kate is delighted to think that, amid all these preparations for a working party, she should have this sweet babe for her own charge and companion about the house; and great is her astonishment on seeing a very low bench pulled out from under the table, and Sally, with a mournful look, placing herself upon it, quite at one end, while the mother, taking up a long, wide piece of lace, lays it across the middle of the bench, places a needle in the child's hand, and saying, somewhat sharply, "Now mind your work, for there is a long spell of it to be done afore ten to-night," proceeds to separate and arrange the respective tasks of the others.

Having ascertained that Kate never saw anything of the kind before, she decides that she also shall commence "drawing;" and deputes one of the girls to instruct her in that easy process. She has only to take

up with the needle a certain thread, easily discovered after a little practice, and carefully to draw it out; so separating into equal widths the large piece which came from the frame. It is easier, however, to teach Kate to do a thing than to succeed in fixing her attention on it for five minutes together; her vagrant habits and vacant mind alike unfit her for steady application; and many and harsh are the reproofs called down by her manifest inattention to her business, by looking up every time a movement is made, or a newcomer drops in. For Mrs. Collins does not employ her own family alone; she has six other helpers in daily attendance; two of whom, being not more than five or six years old, are seated with Sally on the little bench, three more at frames for running; where also Mrs. Collins and her eldest girl work, and the fifth is engaged with the other daughters in the various departments to which that important packet requires to be submitted.

Kate longs for the breakfast hour; not so much from hunger, as because of the prospect it holds out to her of a little active employment—a change in the scene so excessively and disagreeably new to her. She had never been at school, always looking with compassionate contempt on such as could submit to three hours' confinement in one place; and on such a principle did she also re-echo her father's condemnation of factory engagements. She now resolves to spin out her household work as much as possible, and put off to the last minute the return to this monotonous drudgery. But when at length the breakfast-time arrives, the

master of the house comes with it, and throwing a quick glance around to ascertain that all were at their posts, he proceeds to perform the offices that Kate has supposed, as a matter of course, to belong to her; and setting out the motley array of mugs, cups, &c., makes a pot of tea for himself and his wife, mixing milk and water for the girls and Kate, and cutting into slices a loaf of coarse bread, some of which he spreads with rancid butter, and the rest with grease, skimmed from the boilings of last night's pork. All being ready, he gives the word, and the work is laid down: the family takes what is provided, and each of the others produces something brought in her hand for the morning's meal, except one who states that she breakfasted at home.

Collins is the first to finish and leave; and Kate gladly prepares to wash up the things used, but finds that operation either dispensed with or postponed; for each person takes her own drinking vessel to the corner cupboard whence all come, and having thrown any dregs into the fire-place, piles them up as they are. Mrs. Collins gives the table a sweeping brush with her arm, wipes the latter with the common jack-towel, and orders the party to work again. "Yes ma'am," says Kate, "I'spose I shall go to *my* work now, and tidy the room up-stairs."

"You'll go to your work there," answers the mistress, pointing to the lace. Then she adds, "The things up-stairs isn't in nobody's way—time enough for them when ye go to bed."

The drawing, running, hemming, and pearling are

resumed; no wandering glances or loitering fingers escape the vigilance or the rebuke of Mrs. Collins. She discourages conversation too, by very significant hints, when any one seems inclined to become chatty; and the continually repeated "Mind your work," is sometimes accompanied by a threat. Little Sally is heard to laugh in a suppressed tone; and one of her young companions has evidently told her something amusing; this elicits a menace, "Now mind your work, you naughty child, or you sha'n't go to the Sunday school next year: no, nor the year after that."

Sally looks frightened, and her tiny fingers pick the threads with double zeal; while the terrible frown bent on her little comrade, quickly subdues *her* spirits.

The approach of the dinner-hour does not much elate the disheartened villager; but it proves better than her hopes, as a whole half hour is allowed to the family, and an hour to the others who have to go home for this meal. To her unspeakable delight, she is ordered to run to the corner shop, and bring some candles, and one of the girls shows her the way. As they go, she ventures to ask how late they will work. "I dare say till eleven or more at night," answers the other with a sigh; but recollecting her mother had told Sally it was to be done by ten, she corrects herself in a more sprightly tone, adding, "Mother has some washing to finish too."

"But the little beauty of a child can't sit working till ten?"

"She must work as long as there's work to do, and

so we all must. Sally keeps up better than we, sometimes; because, if she's good for a year, she's to be let go to the Sunday school, and learn to read when she is four."

They have reached the grocer's, made their purchase, and run home. "A precious long while you've been, and time enough lost," observes the mistress; while the child sulkily responds, "There was a dozen people in the shop, every one thinking as much about time, and all elbowing us, and we them."

The meal is over; Kate regrets having provided them with a dinner of cold pork, but for which she might have to cook something, but the matter cannot be remedied. When the other girls return, they all receive a lecture on the value of the three minutes by which they have overstaid their hour; and Kate, while she pities them, cannot but find an excuse in her heart for the rigid employer, herself so poor, and labouring with her whole family even harder than they were required to do. With a degree of candid good-nature, frequently found in people who can scarcely render an intelligible reason for what they do or say, this girl is ever ready to frame excuses to herself for the failings of those around her; and her unwillingness to impute bad motives or criminal intentions to persons whose conduct really justify such suspicions, ranks poor Kate among a class peculiarly needing the watchful care of a judicious guide. But she has never known such: her sickly mother had no more power than her idle, dissipated father, to train a young family in the way they should go; and now that Kate is far

from even the shelter of such a home as she had, who shall be her helper — who the helper of hundreds like her — in the difficult path along which she must toil for daily bread?

But such thoughts troubled not Kate: apart from the desire to enjoy unbounded freedom — a desire that has often made her look on the gipsy life as the ne plus ultra of human felicity — she is the most unselfish of beings; and now, as the day disappears, and candles are dimly twinkling on their work, all her other feelings are absorbed in painful anxiety about little Sally, the child of three summers, whom she sees frequently rubbing her heavy eyes with the back of her small hand, and struggling hard against drowsiness. At length, unable to bear the sight of such an unnatural compulsion put on the powers of infancy, she ventures to say, "Please ma'am, if I sit up and do little Sally's work, might she go to bed?"

"And who's to do *your* work then?" asks the mother drily, without looking up; while a whispered remark, "How good natured she is!" passed among the girls. The same thought seems also to move Mrs. Collins, for she resumes in a kinder tone, "Poor people like us, Kate, can't afford to be idle: young and old, we must work for the bit we eat; and though the work *is* over hard, and the morsel too little, we can't help ourselves. Sally is better off than the poor thing next to her; for as soon as work's done, she'll be carried up to her bed, snug and warm; but yon child has a good half mile to toddle through the rain that's beginning to beat on the window, and a cold welcome

and a hard lodging too from them that's no kin to her."

"True enough," is the remark of more than one voice; but as the speakers steal a look of compassion on its wan, half-naked object, the admonitory exclamation checks their roving eyes, "Mind your own work, girls!"

Mrs. Collins then, seeming to have resumed her more talkative habit, in which she rarely indulged, goes on; "Kate, we aint over strict with you, being your first day; but it's a proof you aint minding your own work when you can tell how other people look. Now this business don't allow of staring about or talking. Not a moment is to be lost; and if you lift your eyes up, it must either be that you leave off the while, or else you go on without seeing what you're about. Then as to talking, young people don't know how to let their tongues run one way and their eyes another; nor they can't think entirely about how they're doing their work, and at the same time mind what other people are saying,"—and suddenly Mrs. Collins turned her face directly towards Kate, looking full at her through the spectacles that she had put on when sitting down to the frame, catching the girl in an attitude of attentive listening to what she was saying, but at the same time wholly forgetful of the lace which she holds in her left hand, and the needle in her right, prepared to pick up a thread. "You see," continues her mistress, "now, because I was just speaking to you, all your business is at a stand still."

"Please ma'am, I was minding what you said."

"And that shows that the rule of a work-room ought to be to say nothing. So, once for all, every one of you, I tell you the one thing you've to mind is to mind your work."

"If I'm hanged for it," thinks Kate, "I shall never be able to go on at this. All the livelong day to sit over a trumpery fine thing, and not to go out, not to move, not to look up, not to speak! My feet are as cold as a stone, just with sitting still; and my eyes are as good as poked out with part of one day's picking of these good-for-nothing threads. I haven't heard a laugh since I got up this morning, and the corners of all their mouths look as if they never laughed in all their lives. Then, how white they are — how thin — how crooked they look! and no wonder, while they sit at their frames with one shoulder up, all the day long. And the little ones! that breaks my heart to think of. Well, there's one comfort for me: she'll soon have to set me to look after a baby, for she hasn't time herself, and she can't put *that* to work, any how, before it can use its poor little hands. Yes, I shall be nurse-maid, and what a comfort it will be to toss my arms about, and run out and in! I'll do my best now, to keep their good will, that nobody else may get my place." With this long soliloquy, Kate, naturally the most light-hearted of girls, reconciles herself to present evils, and works so very diligently to the last minute, that her mistress remarks in her hearing, that if the new broom goes on sweeping as clean as now, 'twill be an uncommon good thing for herself. A word of praise goes a great way with Kate, whom no

words of command would move contrary to her own wild will; and she goes to her rest, half reconciled to her lot, though the aching of her eyes, and unwonted coldness of her hands and feet, are a hindrance to the little sleep she might hope to enjoy before the winder's early movements put that sweet visitant to flight.

The event draws near to which Kate is looking forward with so much satisfaction, not only on account of the liberty that she expects thereby to enjoy, but because she is really and tenderly fond of children. On the Sunday that precedes it, she is listening to the complaints of the young winder, who is so ill as to keep her bed all day, and comparing the respective hardships of their situation; in the midst of which, Kate hints at the holiday that she may expect in the capacity of nurse-maid, and is startled by the look, no less than by the reply of her companion, who says, "Never fool yourself with such a fancy; the child will make no manner of difference in the goings on."

"It can't help making a difference. A baby *must* be nursed, for nobody could bear their lives hearing a poor thing bawling or crying all day to be taken up and dandled. It must be fed, and cleaned, and carried about."

"You're a fool!"

"Thankee," says Kate, good humouredly, "many people says the same of me; but I've sense enough to know that a little infant must be nursed when it isn't asleep."

"You'll see."

"But tell me, can't ye? If I am fooling myself,

with the hope of a holiday, best know the worst at once;" and her large blue eyes fill with tears.

"Listen then: as soon as the child's born, they'll give it laudanum, if there's any piece of work; and in a day or two she'll be at the needle; or at best they'll give it Godfrey to begin with, and so go on to laudanum, as she gets up, and sleep it day and night."

Kate stares, trying to comprehend the exact meaning of all this which puzzles her greatly; for she knows nothing of Godfrey, and very little about the other drug. The girl, taking her silence as a proof of disbelief, goes on, "I tell you it's true: I had a child myself last year, and they taught me to keep it quiet—'tis quiet enough now, poor little wretch;" and she laughs; but in a way that makes Kate recoil, as she exclaims, "You! I didn't know you was married?"

"Who said I was?" retorts the other, almost fiercely; then flinging herself round to the other side, she continues muttering, laughing, and crying, to the very great dismay of the village girl, who concludes that she is mad, and slinks away.

Next day, Mrs. Collins says, "Kate, when you go to the grocer's, run round the corner beyond to the 'pothecary's, and get me three pen'orth of Godfrey, and the same of laudanum. There's the sixpence;" and she carefully takes one out of a piece of paper in which it seems to have been long wrapped up for some special purpose. Kate's heart fails her, but she is silent. On going to the shop, she finds a crowd of miserable-looking women, and young girls and boys, all waiting to be served with a black thick composition

that stands on the counter in a very large jar. When her turn comes, she produces two vials, given by her mistress, and makes her demand; but in so faltering a voice that the master of the shop lifts his eyes from the ledger, while the apprentice fills her bottles, and says, "Is it for yourself?"

"No, sir, for my missus, — Mrs. Collins."

"Ah! I suspected as much as that she would take her own way. Hitherto she has set a good example, not giving any of these drugs to her children, and I did my utmost to encourage her in it; but, like others, she is rowing with the stream." This was addressed to the lad beside him; then, turning to Kate, "Is the child born yet?"

"No, sir: please sir," she hesitates and looks round; the shop is clear, for all have hastened away to work; the chemist says, "Well?" and his kind look encourages her; she colours, and says, "Please sir, will these things *hurt* the child?"

"To be sure they will, and they must." Then turning to his apprentice, he proceeds to explain, in technical terms, the evils produced by this frightful system; and Kate longing yet afraid to ask, "Then, why do you sell them the drugs?" leaves the shop with her purchases.

The next evening, Kate is kept up to be at hand; and before daybreak, to her great delight, she is entrusted to complete the first dressing of a very fine little boy. She has tied on the cap, and holding him at arm's length, exclaims in a smothered voice, "O you beauty of a love and a darling! You little pre-

cious thing, you!" and then hugging the poor infant, covers his little forehead with kisses.

"Come, come," says the rough voice of a woman whose attendance had been called in, and who now leaves the mother to look after the child; "come, you silly girl, put the baby down on your lap, and give him a spoonful of Godfrey. Not a very big spoonful, as he's pretty quiet." She places a vial and a spoon on the chair before Kate, and goes back to her post.

Poor Kate! it is a new and severe trial to her feelings; but her mind is made up; she nearly fills the spoon, and resolves to take the first moment when secure of not being seen, to empty it among the cinders. This she effects, and with the cunning of instinct just smears the infant's lip with the back of the spoon; at the same time mentally saying, "Whoever poisons thee, I won't."

After this, Kate is told she may go to her room, and lie down for an hour; the babe is placed beside its mother, and when the party assemble at their work, both are found in a sound sleep; from which the baby first wakes, crying most lustily. The nurse seeing him continue wakeful, declares that the Godfrey must be good for nothing, and recommends a stronger dose, which is administered by the eldest girl, and he is soon torpid. In two or three days, Mrs. Collins has her frame fixed on the bed, and works away to the utmost of her strength, the child being kept quiet by regular doses, and very sparingly nourished. One morning when he cries, and Kate is ordered to hand the Godfrey, she ventures to expostulate, "Please

ma'am, if you'd let him suck a bit, he'd be easy, and go to sleep."

"Yes," replied the mother, "I know that; but then he'd get the habit of wanting suck ever so many times a day, instead of only morning, and dinner-time, and night; and I must leave off my business to take him, or have my head split with his crying. I'm training him now to do without, so as to let me mind my work. Come, come, give us the bottle, and go and mind *your* work."

She is soon up, and at her frame again, and Kate's lively spirits utterly fail under the disappointment. It is not enough that little Sally sits upon her low bench all day, plying her delicate fingers, and utterly losing all the natural characteristics of happy childhood in the silent gloom of such unceasing labour: there, opposite to her, lies on the untidy, unwholesome bed, the breathing corpse of a babe, at its birth remarkably lovely, plump, and sprightly, now haggard, ghastly, and dwindling away, instead of growing, under the poisonous influence of a narcotic drug which is forced through his loathing lips whenever he cries for that nourishment, the superabundance of which actually oppresses and pains his mother, who sits within two paces of his couch. To render the scene more revolting, the cat, the necessary appendage of a house where the low neighbourhood swarms with rats, has a kitten in a snug corner; and takes good care to act a natural part by the sleek fat little beast, whose faint purring, while drawing its fill of the warm nutriment, often falls on Kate's ear in the dead silence of that

gloomy work-room, when the moan of the hungry babe has died away under the powerful operation of the murderous drug. Her own condition is grievous enough; she has become subject to colds and sore throat; evils unknown in her former course of life; her appetite is gone, her eyes smart and burn, and are, even in the deepest darkness, constantly oppressed by the presence of balls and sparkles of light, when she tries to sleep. If sent out for a message, she takes advantage of such momentary freedom, to prolong the time of absence, making any false excuse that occurs, to account for it; or in sulky silence receiving the sharp reprimand of her offended mistress. More than once, a violent hysterical fit has ensued after a long struggle with suppressed feeling, and Kate is on the worst terms with all around her, except little Sally, whose comfort is by no means promoted by her injudicious partisanship, and occasional hints at the cruelty of overworking such a mere infant. Childish and silly, with no sort of education, accustomed to follow the instinctive impulse of her own unsubdued nature, and good-humoured chiefly because her will had never been checked, Kate now began to exhibit the rebellious tendencies of such a being, in a way that would have been insupportable to some; but Mrs. Collins is the coolest of women; the one sole object of her solicitude being to get as much work done within a given time as is possible, she cares little for any event that does not affect the amount of the day's labour; and her examination very rarely extending from the girl's hands to their

faces, sulky looks are usually lost on her, grumbling sounds unmarked, or drowned in her authoritative, "Mind your work."

But new troubles are at hand, and an appeal is made to the strongest of Kate's good feelings by the accumulation of difficulties at once overtaking the family. One of the little girls becomes sick and feverish, and is unheeded as usual, until at the dinner-hour, when others go home, she begs with sobs to be allowed to lie down on the floor; and Mrs. Collins having covered her frame, finds time to look at the child, who is now disfigured with red spots that have been gradually showing themselves during the morning. "'Tis measles!" cries the alarmed mother, "and Sally and the baby will have caught them."

A few days suffice to prove the justness of her apprehension. Sally sickens rapidly, her sight is gone, and she lies burning with fever beside her dying little brother.

CHAPTER XX.

SORROWS AND STRUGGLES.

And now Kate begins to understand that other and greater hardships than those of sitting still and straining the eyes all day over fine work belong to the business in which she is an unwilling labourer. Up to this time, she has seen no indications of actual want, no failure of such food and drink as the hard-working poor are accustomed to, though certainly nothing in the shape of indulgence either in that department or in dress has she witnessed beneath the roof of her employers. Now, however, the scene begins to change; the unavoidable expense and short cessation from work attendant on the poor woman's confinement, together with the present loss of Sally's services, and of the time absolutely necessary to devote to attendance on her and the baby; the absence also of the child who brought the measles there, and of two other girls whose parents feared the infection, all continue to diminish the slender incomings of the family, while their expenditure is increased; and Kate finds the best possible solace for her many discontents in the opportunity thus given for calling all her kinder feel-

ings into play. She endures cheerfully more than her share of bodily privation, takes both her own turn and that of others in nursing, and tries hard to accomplish as much of the lace work as if her hours of employment at it were not interrupted. All is seen and felt too by the unhappy mother, who, having heard the parish doctor's opinion that the infant cannot possibly survive, together with an earnest entreaty that she will never again, by dosing a healthy baby with narcotics, prepare it to fall a victim to the first attack of disease, sits down on a low chair, with none but her sympathizing servant girl present, and, with her apron over her eyes, give way to such an agony of weeping as Kate hardly supposed that one so coldly calm could indulge in.

In a little time, the burst of sorrow having somewhat subsided, Mrs. Collins looks up, and says, "You are the best girl Kate, that ever was sent to comfort a poor family in their troubles. I saw *that* long afore; and though you must have thought me an unfeeling, ill-natured body, because, having no help for it, I am forced to be cold-hearted like, even to my own flesh and blood, I can tell you you've been a help and a blessing to me all along."

Poor Kate! such words are more to her than silver and gold; she twists her apron, and sobs out, "Indeed, missus, I wish I was able to do you any good."

"So you do. I could hardly have treated myself to a cry before my own children, for fear they'd think they might work on my feelings, some day, to shorten

their tasks. That's why I never let them see me moved. But O Kate, do you think when you were trying to beg off that little darling from her sore long work, that you felt more for her than the mother that bore her?" And again her tears gush forth, as she goes to the bed-side, and kisses the crimson face of poor little Sally, who lies in a heavy stupor, panting thick and short. Then, suddenly wiping first her swollen eyes, and next her hands on the ever-damp towel, she draws her frame towards the fire, and prepares to resume her embroidering. Kate interposes: "No, no, missus, don't work now. It's past twelve, and you'll blind yourself after so much crying. Let it be till morning."

"No, I'll work now. Morning will bring more sorrow. Take the baby on your lap, Kate, and I'll talk to you, for it is some comfort to let my thoughts out."

The paper covering is removed from the delicate lace on which she is tracing an intricate and elaborate pattern. Some blooming bride will probably shade her face with that costly veil, amid the sumptuous preparations for a wedding, in the prospect too of luxuries the means of providing which may possibly be traced to some successful speculation on the productiveness of pauper industry. But what may be the fate of her embroidery, the poor woman Collins neither knows nor cares — the acquirement of a few additional pence towards providing a decent coffin for her babe is all that she has in view by this extra work at the midnight hour. She fixes the glasses on her swollen eyes, and while carefully following her beau-

tiful pattern, thus vents some pent-up thoughts to the compassionate ear of Kate, who is the more willing to promote such diversions of the mother's attention, because something tells her that the infant is even now gasping away its spirit on her trembling knees.

"When I married, things hadn't come to the pass they're at now, though they were getting worse and worse every day; steam-machines being so expensive at first cost, and wanting to be altered or changed so often, made the labour of hands and feet worth a deal more than they are now; and Bob and I being both able and willing to work, we began life with a better look out than some others. Well, the one thing that I set myself against was the bad custom of putting young children to toil when they ought to be playing or learning their book, or both, and as to giving Godfrey, or any such stuff to a baby, I vowed I'd sooner die than do it. We went on, making a decent penny, and I kept to my word, till Robert was two years old, and Nancy was well nigh four; but when Tom was born, and times got worse and worse, I found I must give in, or let them starve. I had always a way of my own, plain speaking and plain doing; so I got some of the neighbours about me that had been always prophecying how I couldn't hold out, and told them they were right in that, but I called them all to witness that when I began to put my little one to slave, I knew it was wrong and wicked; and I did it because I was forced to do it; and I laid the sin of it at the door of the rich manufacturer, to answer at the day of judgment for whatever harm might come to the

bodies or souls of me or mine, from such unnatural starving." Then suddenly turning her red eyes, glaring through the magnifying glasses that covered them, towards the infant whose life was quietly ebbing away, she repeats, in a voice that makes Kate start, "Ay, and THEY SHALL ANSWER it!"

The delicate thread has snapped — the thread that she was drawing through her lace; and while she pauses to remedy the mischief thus occasioned, with lips still quivering from the stern energy of that exclamation, the yet more delicate thread of the infant boy's mortal existence breaks too, though of the fact no one is yet conscious. O happy, to flee away and be at rest! Washed from the defilement of Adam's nature in the atoning blood of Jesus; taken away from the evil to come, temporal and eternal; accepted in the Beloved, and admitted to see the face of a Father in heaven, who, though a woman could be taught in the school of bitter necessity to forget her sucking child, never forgets one among the poorest of His redeemed on earth, or suffers one word of His good promise towards them to fail, — happy indeed the soul that escapes to His bosom!

"Kate, don't think me revengeful," resumes the lace-worker, when again her threads are righted "but there is such a thing as justice; and if the poor — them that are able and willing to labour, but can't get the half of their toil's worth — are denied justice in this world, it must be got somewhere else. Nancy, my first child, died when she was six, of a galloping decline; and soon after, little Robert, coming to bring

me my dinner at the factory, where I then worked, got caught in some open machinery and maimed, so that he never could move again, though he lived for a year. I never after that could bear to go among the wheels and pulleys, so I took to the running line, and settled myself to do what the neighbours do, all but the Godfrey. I suckled *her* carefully enough, as I did all the others afore her; but times get harder every day, and my heart, somehow, gets hard with them. But it stands to reason, too, that if the children must either earn a penny or want a pen'orth of bread, do what I will to earn it for them, 'tis best they should work. Truth to say, I had a sore fight with myself to make up my mind about the Godfrey, before that boy was born; but once I make my mind up to anything, it's as good as done. I found I couldn't now possibly spare the time to nurse him properly; and to have him crying for suck would turn my head, and take away the power of working, and of managing the rest. I couldn't help it, I couldn't help it," she piteously repeats, wringing her hands as she looks towards the little corpse; while Kate, half suspecting the truth, yet willing to hope that he sleeps, more carefully shades the still face with the end of her ragged shawl.

"Now look here," says Mrs. Collins, "at the fine piece of work I'm about. A short time ago, eleven or twelve shillings would be paid for running such a veil as this, and I'm only to have two and sixpence for it, and I shouldn't have got so much, only a neighbour came in, when I was with the agent, and I found she was to have that for another of the same pattern, while

the woman was trying to beat me down to eighteen or twenty pence. 'Tis a sore task for eyes and fingers too: if a flaw is found, she'll make that an excuse to take off a slice of the miserable pay I can expect. Kate, a tear will stain, and a stain is a flaw; and now, girl, do you wonder if I try to be like a cold dry bit of stone over my work, and to teach them that's about me the same lesson? Ah, well may they get iron and wood and leather straps to do their business for them, for such things can't give out tears of hunger and sorrow and pain! How *is* he, Kate, dear, think ye, now?" and she spares one anxious look of inquiry towards the girl.

"I — I don't know, missus; he's very quiet: maybe he's asleep." And the faltering voice betrays the fear that she will not utter.

"Has he been quiet long, Kate — very quiet?"

"As still as — as anything."

"Is he warm?"

"No," shuddered Kate, as she touches the clammy brow.

The mother speaks not: she takes off her glasses, covers up her work, removes the frame, and approaches the girl with a steady step and collected manner, but so deadly pale! Uncovering the face, she gazes on it for a moment, then lifts the little corpse in her arms, lays it on her bosom, and clasping it with a crush that would have well nigh extinguished life had any remained, she turns up a look of unutterable desperation, clenches her teeth, stamps her foot, groans from the depths of a mother's desolate heart, and then qui-

etly lays the senseless body on a table, covers it with her apron, and stands muttering in sullen indignation, "Ay, there you lie, my baby, and the doctor says true, I killed you; for I robbed you of the natural milk that was bubbling out o' purpose for you, and all to earn what should feed and clothe others that had as good a claim. And I gave you the drug, that you shouldn't feel the wrong, but sleep away, and leave me to toil on. Do they say I killed you? O, it's false, it's false! God knows I did not neglect you for pleasure nor for gain, nor for anything I'd get by it myself. I aint guilty; *I* aint the murderer! and them that are shall answer it. They SHALL answer it at the great day, Kate" —— and turning to address the companion of her night-watch, she sees her on the floor. A superstitious horror of death had ever been one of Kate's many weaknesses, and she would not have believed all the gold in the world would bribe her to touch a corpse. Perhaps it would not; but her kind feelings had a power that gold possessed not, and she had held one on her lap for half an hour. The consciousness of having so done was too much for her; and on the removal of the fearful charge, and the sight of the mother's stern, silent anguish, she had fainted.

On the next evening Mrs. Collins, who had finished her veil beside the table where still lay the little body, while the father, who had slept from home for a few nights, patched up a coffin for it, prepared to set out on a walk to the manufacturer's; she finds her means wholly inadequate to meet present expenses, and on

the ground of her good and respectable character, thinks that she may possibly get a loan in advance. She has never yet had recourse to the pawnbroker, and will not commence that ruinous system until every other help has wholly failed. Kate having continued very hysterical all day, she rightly judges that a little change will be good for her, and bids her put on her bonnet and warmest shawl. Kate is surprised to find herself so unequal to a brisk walk; she who could so lately hoyden in the roads and fields the livelong day, and think it good fun to trip a dozen miles without resting, now staggers and droops, and becomes fatigued at the end of two or three streets. However, she says nothing to induce her companion to slacken a pace always rapid because her moments were precious; and in a short time they arrive at the office, where Mrs. Collins knows that she shall find the principal, that being a night on which he always inspected the clerks' and agents' books. He has also just taken into partnership his eldest son, a very promising assistant in the estimation of those who can best appreciate the features of his character: and the delighted parent now sits apart, watching the progress of his heir in getting through the business which, for a trial, is committed entirely into his hands this evening. Mrs. Collins calculates on gaining some advantage through the good humour that prevails; and having given in her work to the agent, and stood patiently by during a searching examination into its quality, and received her pittance with some grumbling complaints of defects, which, however, are not pointed out; she boldly taps at the

office door, and enters, followed closely by Kate, who is not a little moved by the imposing appearance of the young manager, and the presence of his father, the great man himself, dressed for a party, to which they are to adjourn after the business of the hour.

Mrs. Collins began to address her old master, but is referred, with a wave of the hand, to his son, to whom she simply relates her ten years' industry in the employ of their house, the sudden calamity of illness brought into it by one of her working girls, the death of the baby, the danger of his sister, and the consequent absence of several helping hands. While she speaks, the young man listens with great good humour, evidently disposed to enter into the subject; and her heavy heart seems somewhat lightened by the tale that she is thus encouraged to tell. Meanwhile the elder gentleman sits with his foot resting on the fender, his eyes fixed on the fire, attentively listening to the dialogue.

"Well, Mrs. So-and-so, it seems you want to get an advance in money from us, on the strength of work to be done in time to come: isn't that it?"

"If you please, sir."

"Now, we have—let's see, Wilkins, about how many hands have we, in one line and another, employed upon our fabric?"

"About four hundred, sir," answered the clerk; "or, to be within the mark, say three hundred and eighty."

"Of all these three hundred and eighty, no doubt a great many are much worse off than you, and very few better: and do you think in your conscience, my

good woman, that there are ten of them who, if we were willing to lend five shillings, would not stretch out their hands to take them? Come, answer me, yes or no."

"Indeed, sir, the working people are so badly off, that I don't suppose many would refuse."

"Very fair: next, supposing it was understood that we were willing to lend five shillings to any who made out a good case of distress, do you think so many as the odd eighty would refrain from applying to us?"

"I don't know, sir; but I know that I never asked before; and a week ago I would not have asked. Keeping out of debt has always been my plan, while I could."

"Very right; and you had better stick to so excellent a plan."

"But, sir, sickness and death"—

"Stop; the chances of sickness and death in a household must be regulated by the number and ages of those composing it. Now, by the last census, it appears that the proportion of deaths among children under two years"——here a very fine, bold-looking boy of fourteen, with a fresh colour, and brilliant black eyes, and handsomely dressed, bouncing into the office, shouts out, "Papa, ma says if the carriage is kept waiting much longer"——

"Hold your tongue, Frank," says the father, "and let your brother proceed with his argument."

Frank looks annoyed; however, he is silent; and after fidgetting about the office a little, places his

folded arms on his brother's desk, and pushing his hat half off, looks from one party to the other, as the dialogue proceeds.

"Such being the proportion of deaths," pursued the new partner, "it follows that the chances are every way increased by the excess of children in a household. How many have you?"

"Five living."

"And dead?"

"Three dead, sir;" and the mother writhes under the slow torture to which she is subjected.

"Eight in all: the youngest, a little infant, dead too; and, of course, every chance, under the present system, of its place being supplied. Now, what inference do you draw from these facts?"

"I don't know, sir, I'm sure."

"No? it's plain to demonstration. In the first place, the chances of sickness and death in your house are not only great, but increasingly so; and the same chances are against your being able to pay a loan, or having obtained one, to avoid running farther into debt. The other inference is no less palpable — you ought not to have burdened yourself with a family of children. Marriages among those who have nothing to live upon but their chance earnings are the root of pauperism."

Here Frank bluntly interrupts, "Where the deuce would you find threaders, and all that sort of little slaves, if the poor didn't marry?"

"Mind your own business, my fine fellow," answers

his brother; but before he could resume the thread of his feeling and instructive discourse, the natural spirit of the poor woman prompts a remark, "The very beasts and birds, sir, are allowed to rear young ones, though *they* have nothing laid up, nor anything to depend on, but that when God sends mouths he will send meat."

"Your case is not analagous, my good woman; birds and beasts soon get a snug covering for their skins, without paying tailor or draper; and they are able to shift for themselves in fewer days than it takes years for a human being to become independent."

"Sir, I can't agree with you: I only know that I'm greatly distressed for a little help to bury my dead babe, and nourish the sick one; and that if I can be favoured with a very few shillings in advance, after working steadily for your house over ten years, I'll faithfully repay it, and me and mine will be beholden to you as long as we live."

"I have proved to you that we cannot consistently do any such thing."

"Then, sir, I can't help wishing you had said no at first; and I wouldn't have troubled you so long. But O, sir, the poor cannot live by their honest labour; the wages we get are so low, we cannot keep life and soul together upon them."

"I dare say not in your case, owing to your imprudent marrying: but that young girl may do better. She's good-looking enough, and may find ways of helping you out, as many others do."

Deeply colouring with indignation, Mrs. Collins

takes Kate's arm, as if to protect her from danger, and silently courtesies, preparing to withdraw, when young Frank shouts out, "Pa, where are the ten shillings you promised me?"

"You'll get them to-morrow."

"I won't; I'll have them now."

"Don't encourage his self-will, father," interposes the elder. "Go along, good woman."

But Master Frank sets his back against the door, and with a menacing air, draws from his waistcoat pocket an elegant little gold watch, which he swings at the end of a short chain, saying, "If I don't get the ten shillings this minute" ——

A half sovereign is immediately chucked to him by his brother, which he catches and triumphantly holds out to the astonished Mrs. Collins, saying, "There, bury your poor little baby, and buy something nice for the sick one, and stick to the good old saying about mouths and meat."

"No, sir; I did not come to beg, but to get an advance. God bless your kind young heart!"

But the elder brother gives a complaisant nod, saying, "You may take it," and Frank at the same moment thrusts it into her hand, opens the door, and says "Good-bye," with great glee.

"You are a fool," says his brother, while he carelessly makes an entry in the book before him. "You will never do for business."

"I don't want to have to do with your dirty business, not I. I'll be a gentleman, and give my money to the poor."

"While it lasts," remarks the father, exchanging a smile with the elder son, as he closes the book; and they adjourn to the evening party.

"O missus," exclaims Kate, "what a sweet beautiful young gentleman that was, and how generous! You've a lot of money now."

"Ay, Kate; but depend on it 'tis down in the book as an advance: I saw the sly look that cold-hearted young man gave to his father, and how they both nodded, and agreed. The young boy won't know it, but his gift is down as a debt, and they'll make it up to him some other way. However, I'm very thankful to have got it, to work out; 'tis a rich sum to me."

"Missus, did you mind how the gentleman said I might make up some other way what we can't earn at our lace? How shall I do it? I shall be so glad to help you."

"His meaning was bad, my dear, and sinful, and wicked; don't think of such a thing."

"Ah," mutters Kate, "if that was it, my dad would think little of cracking his fine pate with a loaded whip-stock."

Mrs. Collins was right as to the loan: Frank, a regular spoiled child in a wealthy family, was not to be contradicted, and would have thought nothing of selling his watch for a guinea when he had made up his mind to do a thing for which he had not the means. The loan was, therefore, duly recorded; and on the following morning the lad starts for school again, no loser by his generosity, nor anything the wiser as to

the channel into which it has been turned; and to prevent the spreading of any rumour of half-sovereigns being given away at the office, a communication is made to Mrs. Collins that instalments of a shilling per week will be accepted until the money is repaid.

CHAPTER XXI.

RESTLESSNESS.

KIND actions, the result of impulse only, and not springing from or nurtured by the grace of God in the heart, will be fitful as the feeling that prompts them must be transient in a world so trying to the principles as the very best part of it is found to be. What then can we expect among the worst conditioned, most untaught of our population? While the excitement lasted, when the baby was carried under its father's arm to the grave, and while Sally remained in danger, from which the unexpected half-sovereign was the principal means of rescuing her, a stimulus was still supplied to Kate Clarke's enthusiastic sympathy; but now all is over, Sally is again at work, the place of the girl who died of the complaint, which she introduced into the family, is filled up by another; the debt presses heavily on Mrs. Collins' spirits, and the instalment, rigidly exacted, deducting two pence daily from her scanty means, falls in the shape of some privation on each of the party. Scarcely the tinge,

much less the taste of milk is now perceptible in the morning and evening mug of warm water; the slice of coarse bread is farther curtailed of its proportions, and to increase their difficulties, the winder brings lame excuses in place of her trifling rent, while the fiery eye and breath impregnated with alcohol at once explain the cause of present defalcation, and betray the hopelessness of future punctuality. Oppressed with so many troubles, the mistress of the house becomes more silent, more cold, and more strict than ever; her children and their youthful fellow-labourers more comfortless; while Kate, unable to comprehend how a piece of real gold should so soon melt away, and at the same time retaining a strong sense of her own willing services in the hour of sorrow—which season also had afforded her a variety of employment now again exchanged for the imprisonment at her monotonous task-work—Kate begins to fancy herself especially aggrieved, and looks with an eye of downright enmity on those who had, but a short time before, become quite endeared to her.

The poor girl has, indeed, much cause to complain; not that her privations or inflictions exceed those of the rest, but her previous way of life, and the unsubdued wilfulness of her spirit aggravate her share of the common suffering into something worse. Occasional conversations, too, with the young woman above stairs very much tend to embitter her feelings. This girl is one of the wretched, and, unhappily, numerous class of female labourers who having preserved no vestige of moral character, or individual respectabili-

ty of any kind, plunge deeper and deeper into vice, lending themselves as ready tools to the Spirit of evil in whatsoever may help to strengthen and to extend his dominion upon earth. Of course, she feels against her landlady what an unprincipled, profligate debtor will naturally feel in contemplating the distress wantonly aggravated by his own dishonest misapplication of what ought to help the struggling family; and she amuses herself by putting into Kate's head the most absurd prejudices and suspicions. "Depend on it," she says, "many's the hot supper and jug of strong ale the old foxes treat themselves to, when we are lying here, too tired, and cold, and hungry, to sleep."

With this monstrous idea in her head, Kate sits down next morning, after a more than usually miserable breakfast, to the frame — for she has become a runner too; and after fidgeting so much as to annoy those who are near her, she says, abruptly, "Missus, I want some new shoes; my feet are just out of these."

"Mind your work, Kate; there's a time for everything, and this is the time to look after your hands, not your feet."

"My hands can't work when my feet are perished with cold as they are."

"Sitting still makes the feet cold," observes one of the girls, "and you'd be no better if you had top-boots on."

The mention of top-boots brings vividly to Kate's mind the inn yard where her father was ostler; and with that recollection comes a host of others, all presenting in strong contrast past freedom and present-

bondage. She gets more irritated every moment, and is in such evident danger of damaging her work, that Mrs. Collins sees it needful to interfere. "Behave yourself," she says, "or I shall be forced to use harder words and ways too than I wish."

"Behave myself!" mutters Kate, audibly enough; "I behaved myself more to some people's liking, may be, when I sat up all night to nurse, after working all day. It was, 'dear Kate' then, and 'the best girl in the world,' and, I s'pose, if anybody was dying again" ———

"Mind your work, Kate Clarke," interrupts Mrs. Collins, in a most peremptory tone; but before she spoke, and after it, she had to clear her voice, which was uneven still; and Kate does not exactly know whether she is glad or sorry to have evidently inflicted pain by her unfeeling allusion to the past. The thought, however, of the hot suppers turns the scale; she grins with a satisfied expression, and is silent.

Between sullenness and rudeness, she continues to make her presence very annoying to her mistress during the rest of the day. At night the winder stays out — a very frequent occurrence — and while pondering in her mind the mischievous suggestions of that perilous companion, she again suddenly thinks of the suppers, and resolves to steal down the stairs, and to peep and listen for indications of some feast below. These steep narrow stairs ran outside the wall of the lower room, being, in fact, under the roof of the adjoining cottage, and terminated in a sharp-cornered step, one side forming the threshold of the street door,

and the other of the work-room. Kate first applies her eye to the keyhole; all is dark; she sniffs the air; nothing savoury is to be perceived; but voices are audible, and by seating herself a step or two higher, and placing her ear against a crack in the flimsy wall, she may make some discoveries. Huddled up, therefore, in her shawl, the foolish girl sits shivering, and overhears a dialogue between her master and mistress.

"I tell you, dame, we can't hold out: and if something don't turn up I shall have to try the parish."

"The parish will do nothing for us, you know, Bob, unless we go into the workhouse; and there we shall be parted from one another, and from the children. We shall have to work as hard as ever; we shall be as ill fed, or worse, if it can be; and them dear girls that I now keep under my own eye may be parcelled off to the factories to suffer, and to turn out as wicked as the worst."

"Well, but what's to be done? Here's rent day coming round; and though I've hardly taken a drink of beer these weeks past, and turned my hand to every job I could get, and though you've done as much, and kept the children at it too, and have worn yourself to the bare bones with toil and hunger, yet I don't see any chance we've got. You say there's still six shillings to pay out of the ten?"

"Yes, and that poor girl Kate does not earn the food she eats; much less help me. She has got discontented, and sadly slow at her frame; but when I think of her kind-heartedness to the baby, and of the

ruin she'd certainly run into if we cast her off, I try to pass it over and hope for the best. Sally is going into a consumption; and as for Jane" ——— Here the poor young threader's hand was heard upon the latch, to which he had a key, and Kate made a hasty retreat, with symptoms of a dreadful cold, sore throat, and sorely wounded by self-reproach at what she has heard.

The next morning the consequences of her folly are evident, in hoarseness, cough, and such difficulty of swallowing, that Mrs. Collins is alarmed. However, Kate insists upon working as usual, and ponders all the while on the uselessness of continuing at a post where she can do nothing for herself or others. A wish for change has taken full possession of her, and nothing seems so desirable as her first plan of service in a family. In fact, it was with such a view that her father brought her here, being entrapped by the stranger, who, on the look-out for destitute labourers to increase the competition, and so lower the wages of the poor, had easily discovered his wishes for Kate, and promised accordingly. Mrs. Collins was no party to the deception; she had been told that a young person wanted to learn the business, whose industrious habits would make her a profitable inmate; and on these terms, mutually deceived, they met. Now Kate determines to make a bold effort for freedom; and that evening an opportunity offers, while they alone remain at the frames to finish a task; she thus begins; —

"Missus, I'm afraid I'm more trouble than profit to you."

"I don't say you're much trouble, Kate; but more profit you might be to me and yourself if you set your mind to it."

"That's what I can't do; I never was used to keep still, and I shall lose my health, but never get anything in exchange for it."

"Pity you didn't think of that afore you chose the trade; it's a poor one at best."

"I never chose it, missus; I never heard of it. I came to be your housemaid, and that was all."

Mrs. Collins looks up in utter astonishment, and Kate proceeds. "So now, if I could get a service in the place, and you'd give me a decent character, there would be food and wages, and work that suits me; and I needn't sit fretting over this nasty frame till I drop off my stool into the grave."

"Kate, if there was a service to be got by anything I could do, don't you think I'd be willing to help you to it? I suppose there isn't a young woman in fifty among us that wouldn't be ready to jump out of her skin at the chance of a respectable service; but once at the lace, always at the lace, if you come here. They that are used to it are not reckoned fit for anything else; nobody would dream of taking a winder, for they are soon lost in the factory life; and though once in a more respectable branch, yet the notion gets about that a lace-runner would be no gain to any family, and perhaps it is true."

"I don't see why it should be true, I'm sure."

"Why, you know, girls are put to it as soon as they can draw out a thread. They have no time to get any

learning or knowledge of any sort, beyond the lace, except what some of them pick up at the Sunday school, and that's just enough at the most to help them to read a few verses in the Bible or a sixpenny story-book; and as they know nothing of accounts, nor how to cut out a shirt, or to cook, you may be sure there is no place for them among the upper servants; and as to hard work in the house, not one in twenty could stand it a month. Our joints get so stiff and cramped, our backs so weak, our stomachs so sickly, our breath so short, and our heads so giddy, that a lace-runner in service is only fit to be knocked about by the rest, and discharged as useless. The mistresses, great and small, know this, and have a rule against taking any such."

"Well, but I'm only a few weeks at it, and I've been used to a country life, strong and able, and willing to do any hard work, if I might but move about. Sitting still all day long is what kills me, missus—indeed it does."

"Well, Kate, don't cry over your frame; I'm sure I will do what I can for you. Have you ever been in any service?"

"No; this was to be my beginning."

"If you went to seek for a service, and could satisfy the lady that you'd only been here a few weeks, she'd ask for a reference to the person you last lived with in the country: but you'd want very strong recommendations from home; and even then, good servants out of place are so plenty, I hardly think there is one would be at the trouble of making so many inquiries about a

stranger, and a lace-runner. You don't look as fresh and strong as when you came."

"Wasn't it a cruel shame of that man to tell dad such lies about it, and so get me here?"

"Ah, it was all to crowd the markets, and keep down the wages," says Mrs. Collins, shaking her head. Kate does not understand this, and repeats her declaration, "Come what will, I'll not be a runner any longer."

"Couldn't your father get a place for you near home?"

This idea is eagerly caught at, and the next day a letter is written by a neighbour in Kate's name, to her father, but no reply comes. Day after day she looks out for the post, fretting more and more under the suspense, and adding not a little to the trials of poor Mrs. Collins, who now, with her two eldest girls, is glad to sit at the frames from five in the morning till past midnight, for a little extra profit. Meanwhile the winder having absented herself two nights, and come home on the third much intoxicated, threatening the lives of the family, she has been altogether ejected, with the loss of what she owed, and they are anxiously looking out for a more reputable lodger. An influx of new hands from the rural districts, holds out a hope of such acquisition, but, alas! it occasions, as usual, a farther reduction in the miserable prices paid; and though the whole family now worked till the younger ones frequently fainted from fatigue and fasting, matters became daily worse. Every article that would fetch a

few pence was pledged; and little Sally, with the ravenous appetite that belongs to consumption, often cries for the food which no stretch of self-denial on the part of the rest can supply her with. The public papers gave testimony to a very brisk state of trade; many who before drove only a phaeton and pair, now started an elegant new chariot or coach; some who had eaten from earthenware dishes began to sport china; Kidderminster carpeting gave place to Brussels, and Brussels was succeeded by Turkey; and wherever luxuries already abounded, they became more abundant still; but the press of work was met by continual crowds from the agricultural classes, attracted by the fame of this demand, and by means of such wholesale competition, many who had before been half fed, were now two parts starved; while all, to escape utter destitution, struggled for employment at any price that could be got.

"Well, missus," says Kate, on coming down one morning in her night-cap, which she rarely removed till dinner-time, dirty, haggard, and stooping as if bent by age, "it's no use my trying this any longer. Those that's brought up to it my bear it; I can't. Those three hours a-bed do me no more good than if I sat up all the while; and my fingers will go on, and my eyes stare, as if the frame was before me still. 'Tis plain my family has cast me off, if they aint all dead or transported; and I must shift for myself."

"But what will you do? there's crowds of people about the doors wherever employment is to be got, and

many of them have friends in the place, helping to watch for the first opening. What can you do, a young girl with nobody to speak for you?"

"I must trust to luck, that's all."

"Luck" is the god on whom the great mass of our Christian population depend for everything. An idol to whom not a few human sacrifices are offered, though by a process of slaying not so brief as that adopted in heathen lands. Instead of letting out the heart's blood by the point of a knife, it is secretly sucked away, drop by drop, absorbed like the morning dews, by a process that gives no such shock to the nerves of the well-fed passer-by as would be sustained if the victim appeared externally drenched in gore. The "luck" of the employer often fills his coffers by the immolation of a few hundreds of these victims; and their own particular "luck" places them in the road to self-destruction, under the chariot wheels of their fellow-man's prosperity. O! shame, shame to the callous-heartedness of England's sons, who, having the power to restrict, by a wholesome exercise of their legislative authority, this murderous crusade of wealth against poverty—against the bodies and the souls of the poor—will not interpose; and double shame, twice doubled be to the fair, fascinating daughters of England, who well know that they might, if they would, so bring the cause of their destitute sisters before the eyes, and so impress them on the hearts and consciences of those fathers, brothers, husbands, lovers, sons of theirs, as to rouse them to the fulfilment of a duty, for the due performance of which the

providence of God placed them where they are! Shame to the clergy of England, that they do not, headed by their bishops, come forward in a body to assert their right, their divinely-vested right, of interceding for the lambs of their Master's fold, whom Satan seizes before their eyes, and yokes as beasts of burden, and mangles with his lash, and finally flings by the score into his own infernal den! Shame, too, to those who, while forming societies, and contributing largely of their means, to send the glorious Gospel of light and love into all the barbarous lands, among all other heathens, idolaters, blasphemers, and destroyers, never yet joined in one vigorous effort to break the fetters of sin and death and hell from off the necks of their own baptized fellow-countrymen! Surely it must excite the derision of the Prince of darkness to mark how the mail, bearing our munificent contributions for foreign objects of Christian philanthropy, flies through the districts of his undisturbed dominion, and shakes the hovels of his unpitied victims. Infanticide in India or China is a very awful thing; slaving on the African coast makes our freeborn blood tingle in our veins; and against both man's lip can utter most persuasive sounds of eloquent appeal, woman's eye can shed a torrent of soft tears over the tale; but infanticide in Nottingham or Birmingham, slavery in Manchester or Leeds — our excited feelings are calmed down; the bright flame of our zeal expires; we have no plans, no funds, no ardent missionaries for such a field. It is so very near, so perfectly accessible, our way is so completely unobstructed; no seas to cross, no

new language to acquire, — in short, it is a mere domestic duty, and the people are they of our own national household. Therefore, under the full blaze of divine inspiration, we take the apostle's pen, and write ourselves down, "WORSE THAN INFIDELS."

Such a girl as we have been so far tracing through one branch of industry, the sole object of which is to provide an article of superfluous luxury for such, in every rank, as have either fifty guineas or five pence to expend upon it, might, in her native village, have obtained so much of scriptural and general education as should fit her for domestic or other respectable employments. But among the wretched beings who are born amid the horrors of infantine drudgery, it is impossible to look for such advantage. It might, indeed, be easy, if we could find pious individuals so minded, to establish a system of domestic visiting in homes like that which has been described; where at least so much instruction might be engrafted as can be taken in by the ear alone; and in that way how many a sorrowing heart might be comforted! how many a wounded conscience healed! how many a lost sinner directed to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! We are no less expert in making difficulties in the way of home duties than in supporting those which resist us abroad.

Kate Clarke has made as many inquiries as her few moments of freedom admitted of, but nothing appears to contradict the evidence of Mrs. Collins as to the hopelessness of her search. At last one of the girls happening to mention that her eldest sister is employed

in the hosiery trade, she turns her thoughts to that branch, and takes the opportunity of the morrow being Sunday to visit the humble abode of her companion. There, amid much dirt and misery, she finds the stockener, a very pale-faced young woman, with exceedingly weak eyes, stretched out on a low bed. Kate inquires whether she is ill: "No," answers the other, "not more ill than any other day; but after sitting all the week, one's glad of a stretch."

"Then you do sit all the week?"

"To be sure. I work at a neighbour's, six doors off: he has four frames, one to himself, one for his wife, one for their daughter Betty, and t'other for me. We carry on the whole business in that house, as much as in the biggest shop or factory; for the family is large enough."

"Then let's hear all about it," says Kate, eagerly.

"Why do you want to know?"

"'Cause my life is tired out, and my eyes just blinded with lace-running; so I want to change to some other business."

"Don't be so foolish as to change to stockening at any rate," says the other, half raising herself from her recumbent position. "There's six one and half a dozen of t'other, as to the hardship you talk of; but you're in a decent quiet family now, and you don't know what 'tis to sit tied by the legs, as it were, all day long, close beside men that have no manners nor decency, talking bad language, drinking and swearing, and, may be, beating wife and child, with a stray kick for the 'prentice. No, no; stop as you are."

"Well, but let me hear about the stockening."

"Why, Brown and his wife, and Betty and I, have frames, each one, and the stocking is wove upon it; the two smallest children wind the cotton, the two next to them sow the seams, and another one stretches them on the board, to put them into shape. The chevening is every bit the same, in its way, as your lace-running, only it blinds the eyes faster. We want a power of light, and it soon takes the sight away!"

"But there is more change-like," persists Kate, "more different things going on."

"That doesn't make a difference to them concerned: it only crowds us more, and cramps us up. Every one must sit down in their own place, and no room to move from it. Talking don't answer; at least the man and woman that gets all the profit don't choose their workers to talk. Brown, like many more, takes holiday Mondays, and often Tuesdays, and drinks away a week's earnings; and we are made to work it out at the week's end."

"I'm sure I shouldn't mind doing three times as much work afterwards, if I might have a little liberty now and then," says Kate, half crying, as the helpless slavery of her condition, and that of the poor around her, is forced more and more on her reluctant mind.

"If that's the case," answers the other, "you had better go as a winder to some idle fellow, with a lace frame at home. You can't be employed when the machine isn't going, and it must stand still whenever he's not at it. But I warn you 'tis a dog's life you'll

lead, three parts of the week, if you do this: so don't think I'm recommending it."

"I don't care what life I lead, so long as I get a little fresh air and liberty sometimes."

Poor girl! at any price, however dreadful, she is willing to purchase a little share of what the bountiful Creator has freely dealt out to all His creatures, at the same time implanting in them universally a craving for a proper portion of the general blessing. Corrupt nature will evermore desire to abuse the gifts that ought to be moderately and thankfully used; and for such propensity divine mercy has provided an all powerful check in the supplies of that directing and restraining grace, which is promised daily in answer to the prayer of faith. This faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, which again requires teachers, sent by Him, to make its glad tidings known, and to enable the simple to seek after wisdom. And we again point out the crying sin of England, in having millions of her own children without the possibility of such instruction. The counsel that causeth to err, meets them at every step, through the vigilance of Satan, and the cruel neglect of their wealthier brethren: but to how many of their miserable homes is the warning word brought, in love, and patience, and sympathy, and with such help for their necessities as may prove the particular nature of that doctrine which comes recommended by the title of "Peace on earth, good will towards men?"

Poor Kate Clarke passes that Sabbath in hunting about for a person whose habits are likely to ensure

her frequent seasons of idleness—the only substitute for reasonable relaxation in our slave districts. She is not long in finding such a man; one who has lately married a lace-runner, and has hired a machine from a proprietor to work it at home. Being a powerful fellow, he has taken a wide one, which requires the utmost labour of hands, feet, and eyes, to work it; he has a vacancy for a winder, which Kate eagerly applied for, and returns to Mrs. Collins in high spirits, to communicate the result of her day's journey.

"You don't mean it, to be sure!" exclaims her old employer. "Why the slaving at the week's end will do you more harm than being idle two days can do you good. Besides, though I don't deny that our heavy toil without a stop is very sore to stand, I do think being idle is much worse. Do they feed you?"

"No, missus: I'm to find myself, and to have my wages at the week's end. I was thinking, may-be, you'd let me sleep here, paying you by the week, till you get a better lodger."

"I don't object to that, so long as you keep sober and decent; but when you get into bad habits we must part, for the sake of my girls, and the liking they have for you. Besides, you must promise not to tempt them away from their stations. But, Kate, it goes sorely against my mind this new turn of yours: it cannot lead to good."

"Missus!" exclaims the girl, "it's no use saying anything against it. If I must starve to death, I can starve; but I *can't* stand this dreadful way of life any longer. I know what hard living was before I came

here: many's the day I've had to content me on two pen'orth of brown bread; but in the autumn I'd flavour it with blackberries, nuts and ripe sloes — and the pleasure of plucking them out of the hedges was the best part of the feast. The tuppence itself was often earned by keeping the birds off the corn with a wooden rattle; and whatever I wanted, I didn't want liberty. 'Tis no use telling you the difference, for you don't know it. I feel as if it was almost a sin to let God Almighty's warm sun be shining all about, and never take the benefit of it at all. Get me a servant's place, ever so mean; let me scrub or scour, or stand at the wash-tub, or go messages — anything but shutting me up in a prison the live-long week, and I not having done any harm to deserve it!" Here she bursts into a passion of sobbing and weeping, and will not be comforted.

Mrs. Collins, silent and cool, only shakes her head; she has no better arguments to bring forward than those drawn from selfish considerations, and what worldly consequences may ensue. She has just heard, accidentally, from a person who had been to our old village, that Tom Clarke has taken shelter in the union workhouse, and his other children are sent off by the board of guardians to some cotton-factories; of course poor Kate has no earthly resource; and since she cannot longer bear the dreary confinement of her first calling, the woman is aware that nothing remains for her but snares and miseries, in whatsoever direction her ungoverned, untaught humour may dispose her to turn. She therefore waits till the girl's agitation has

subsided; and then bids her take heart, for fretting will only unfit her for her place. She also recommends, as her new master is well off for his station, the asking of an advance, however small, to obtain a few absolutely needful things; and directs her how to supply herself with the cheapest food, inviting her to eat it under her roof, if she finds no better place to go to. Kate soon brightens up, and having made herself as decent as she can, sets off next morning for her new situation.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FINALE.

In the cottage of James Wilkins all seems new and smart; his wife, a sickly-looking girl, still wears her bridal finery, and takes on herself the consequential air of the mistress of a family, though as yet she knows little of the cares, and nothing of the duties, belonging to that character. Wilkins, being an excellent workman, has some money in hand, out of which he willingly advances to Kate a fortnight's wages, on the assurance of the Collinses that she is a steady, industrious girl. She is surprised at the size of the lace-making machine, and the laboriousness of the employment that belongs to Wilkins; and not a little amused at seeing the lace made without any other help from the hand than what is required to keep the frame in motion. The threaders are, a young brother of Wilkins and an orphan boy, bound to him by the parish; the winders are his wife and Kate; and for some days they go on, working very diligently, but with much cheerful talk and joking, which delights her greatly. She finds it hard to keep her promise of not tempting

away her former comrades by glowing descriptions of the agreeable change.

A change it is, but only of scene, occupation, and society; she is as far from liberty and fresh air as ever; the air is anything but fresh in the few narrow lanes and courts through which she has to run for a short, hasty meal; and the hours of work are prolonged at the master's will, who is just now in a very industrious mood, wishing to accomplish the purchase of sundry additional comforts for his new home. By the end of the fortnight, Kate finds that she is as tired of the winding as ever she was of the lace-running, and begins to fear that her informant was mistaken as to Wilkins' love of a holiday. However, she is soon undeceived; a few weeks prove the utmost limit to which he can stretch his patient perseverance; and to her great joy she is informed on Saturday night that she will not be wanted till Tuesday. Here, then, is the grand object attained; Kate wants to see the country once more, and on the Sunday she sets out on a ramble, which is prolonged till Monday night, in idle, but as yet harmless, roving about. She is not half so strong as formerly; the frosty air bites her with a severity till then unknown; her ankles swell, her feet blister, and her hoarse voice can scarcely find a passage through the throat that has become of late liable to frequent inflammation. Her back and shoulders ache terribly; her dazzled eyes can hardly brook the faint gleam of wintry sunshine, and a sense of oppression across the chest renders every short gasp of breath difficult; yet in spite of all these drawbacks, hitherto

unknown to the stout village girl, and too plainly symptomatic of the abiding physical evils that result from such a life as all females of a lace and hosiery district must lead, Kate revels in the enjoyment of what she feels to be freedom; and secretly resolves to encourage all around her in making a "Saint Monday" in each succeeding week.

Returning late in the evening to Mrs. Collins, she finds the poor woman with her children, all pale, silent, and sad, still labouring at their interminable tasks. The closeness of the room, the forlorn, inanimate looks of its inmates, and the sight of that hated manufacture spread out on all sides, occasion a revulsion in Kate's feelings, that affects her frame also. She seats herself in a corner, and stares vacantly on the group, with an undefined emotion of self-reproach, almost wishing that she had volunteered a few hours' help to lighten their galling toil; and secretly resolving sometimes to do so. However, she now hastens to her bed, and on the morrow, finds for the first time Mrs. Wilkins in very bad humour, waiting, with the rest, the arrival of her husband, who, having slipped out at an early hour, has sent a message that he cannot return just yet, but will when he is able.

Hours pass before he appears; and his wife commences a lecture, which, as it is her first, he seems resolved shall also be her last attempt at interfering with his sovereign will, and answers so fiercely, with such unequivocal menaces of making her smart if she gives her tongue any liberties, that the poor creature shrinks back alarmed, and Kate secretly trem-

bles at the probable consequences of offending such a ruffian. Henceforth every vestige of domestic comfort disappears from this abode: Wilkins has allowed his savage temper to break forth, and has also returned to the circle of dissolute companions from whom he appeared to have disengaged himself, and whatever affront or annoyance he encounters abroad, the consequences fall on those under his command at home. Resolved to take his full swing of idleness and dissipation without losing any part of his profits as a workman, he makes the latter part of the week a season of such unintermitted toil as his own great strength can well sustain, but which well-nigh kills his wife, and the helpless apprentice, whom he cruelly ill-uses. Kate, after the first day's frightening, musters somewhat of her old obstinate determination of character, and resists any encroachment on her independence; but finding that all is visited on the two victims who cannot escape, and also feeling in herself a nervousness and frequent tremor that she cannot quite suppress, she soon ceases to encourage what he calls rebellion, and becomes as much a slave as they. The idle Monday is now passed in lounging about the streets, or over the fire of any neighbour who will admit her. To Mrs. Collins she does not go, except at night, because she cannot bear to see them perpetually working, without offering help which her lassitude will not allow her to afford. Winding from Thursday morning to Saturday night, in the glare of light that Wilkins has managed to provide during the dark hours by placing before his lamp a glass globe filled with

water, has almost blinded her; and she half resolves, after a few weeks' trial of this mode of life, to return to the lace-running, rather than continue it.

But snares are set, and who is there to warn her against the evil to come? She has never willingly associated with the utterly depraved class, beyond what is unavoidable where all descriptions of characters are frequently thrown together, and she dearly prizes the name of a virtuous girl, which none can deny to her, still clinging to the fond hope of being some day received into domestic service, never lost sight of, as the grand object of her ambition. But nobody has ever looked upon her lonely insignificance: no Christian teacher has sought out the few yet uncontaminated, in that mass of evil where she abides, to impart the instruction which they, alas! have not been led to seek in the appointed place; and those who wear the elegant article are as indifferent as the great bulk of those who provide and sell it, to the physical, moral, and spiritual condition of the ill-paid drudges who fashion it.

Kate, one Tuesday morning, calculating the probabilities of her master allowing himself a prolongation of the Monday's debauch, has loitered about; and coming late to the place of work, is hailed with a volley of oaths and abusive epithets by the man, who has been home half an hour before her. His wife is pale and terrified, and the pauper orphan boy, with his head, swollen, eye blackened and nose bleeding, is bitterly crying in the corner. The companions from whom Kate has just parted, have, with no good object

in view, encouraged her to make a stand against such a tyrant, and she answers him by saying, "It's no wonder if anybody aint in a hurry to come to such a shop as this, with no better welcome than cursing and swearing, and bad names."

The altercation continues but a short time, poor Mrs. Wilkins' imploring looks prevailing with Kate to drop it; but the ill feeling is such on both sides, that when threatened with the loss of her employment, the girl answers with spirit that there is plenty to be had without coming to him. He laughs, and nods, well knowing that she may seek many days before she finds an opening for a fresh engagement: and on the Saturday evening following, he pays her the poor pittance due, with the information that he has somebody to take her place on Monday, and he will not any longer stand in the way of her advancement in the trade.

What is she to do now? The Sunday is spent in looking about, and the two following days. She has applied to be taken back by Mrs. Collins, but there is no vacancy, nor work enough for the family themselves to do, owing to the competition of a neighbour, who has taken it on still lower terms from the third-hand female agent. Kate gives up her lodging, because while she is there a young woman comes to offer as a permanent lodger, with a better price than she can pay; and with a vague hope of getting into the country again, Kate ties up the few rags that she has in a bundle, and sets off with a twopenny loaf as her sole means of support, and no money, in the direction of her home. But the time is past when she might have taken a jour-

ney on foot: having proceeded only a very few miles, she finds herself at nightfall without the means of procuring a shelter; and roving about until by the moon's light she discovers a rude shed in a field, with a cart in it, she creeps under that cart, pulls some loose straw about her, and sleeps till dawn. The thought then strikes her of trying to find employment at the farm to which she supposes the shed belongs, but no such building can she find; and becoming more faint every moment with hunger and fatigue, she is forced to resolve on returning to the town, and making one more attempt to find work. "If I can't get it," she thinks, "I must go to the parish, and they'll pass me to my own." This was a bitter suggestion: to go back a confirmed pauper to the place she had left but a few months before with such loud boasts of her bright prospects, was humiliating to the last degree. She determines to leave nothing untried that might enable her to remain where she was, at least unknown, and quickens her steps towards the great labour mart, where hundreds were elbowing their way to the enviable privileges of a servitude in many respects harder than that of the enslaved African.

Her search is fruitless: cold, hungry, sick at heart, homeless, friendless, and hopeless, she stands before a building set apart nominally for the exhibition of theatrical performances. Within, lights are gleaming gaily, and the half-opened door shows to the shivering wanderer a painted avenue of trees and flowers, leading to the farther apartments, whence the sound of song and merriment come, as though sorrow had there no

resting place; and yet more invitingly come the fumes of hot liquor and savoury dishes. An acquaintance whom she had hitherto shunned, finds Kate lingering near this dangerous portal, and urges her entrance. The pleadings of destitution, not those of allurement, prevail; she casts one wild look up towards the black sky, whence a heavy snow shower had commenced falling, and muttering through her clenched teeth the oft-repeated malediction against some who hear it not, "Let them answer it," she crosses the threshold. And here we part with her forever.

We have carefully avoided including in this sketch the hardships endured by men and boys in the business. Both are great, and the condition of the latter, as threaders, is most dreadful; and the demoralization, the debasement of the manly character inevitably resulting from a childhood and youth of groveling, slavish toil, might fairly be classed among the wrongs of woman, seeing that its ill consequences are generally sure, sooner or later, to fall on her. Still we will not include these particulars, but refer to the evidence of sworn commissioners, as before, for actual confirmation of what we have brought forward.

And first as to the lace-runners. "The lace embroiderers or runners, as they are called," says Mr. Grainger, "are subject to the longest hours — fifteen, sixteen, and even seventeen hours a day being not uncommon. All parties engaged in the above processes are liable to over-time work whenever the trade is brisk; it is not at all uncommon to work very

late on Friday, and not unfrequently all that night. . . In mending, drawing, pearling, and joining, the usual custom is for small mistresses to employ from six to twelve young children. The work-room is usually small and confined, and often cold in the winter. The children are generally not allowed to talk, a circumstance that must greatly increase the irksomeness of the occupation, which is entirely of a sedentary nature . . . . The wages in all these branches are very low, and such as are quite insufficient to afford a decent living. The lace-runners especially are in a most miserable condition; in the winter, many grown-up women, working thirteen or fourteen hours a day, cannot earn more than from two and sixpence to three and sixpence a week, out of which sixpence is to be deducted for candles. Common hands, at the best season, do not earn more than five shillings a week; the most skilful about seven shillings."

Next as to the ages at which children are put to work: we give in full one description from the same authority, which more than verifies all that we have represented.

"Mrs. Houghton, Walker Street, New Snenton; is a lace-drawer, and has four children — Harriet eight years, Anne six, Mary four, and Eliza two years old; of these the three elder are employed as lace-drawers. Harriet was not quite three when she began to work, Anne was about the same, and Mary *was not quite two years old.* Eliza has tried and drawn a few threads out." (All this was interrupted with, 'Mind your work.' 'Take care.' 'Make haste.'

'Now, Anne, get on.' 'Mind your work.') "Begins generally at six A. M. in the summer, and seven in the winter; in the former, goes on till it is dusk, in the latter, till ten P. M. The two biggest children work with witness these hours; Mary begins at the same time in the morning, but she leaves off at about six P. M. The children *have no time to go out to play;* they go out very seldom. Have breakfast whilst they have time to get it; the same with dinner and tea. Have about *a quarter of an hour* for each meal. If the children were paid, the eldest would earn about two shillings, the second one and sixpence, and the youngest one shilling a week. Earns herself, with plenty of work, about one shilling a day; but at present it is very slack. The children are obliged to sit at their work: they sit all day.

"'Mind your work.'

"The work tries the eyes; the black is the worst; it is dree work.

"'Now mind your work.'

"The children have very good health; they go to a Sunday school. Her husband is a joiner; he has not had more than half work for two months.

"'Now, Mary, mind your work.'

"He has generally regular work: his regular wages are twenty-three shillings a week."

So, in this case, the man's wages with those of his wife, generally amounted to thirty shillings a week; yet here, through the power of this infamous system, are a little child of eight years, another of six, another of four, employed without intermission, without time

to masticate their food, without an interval for play, or opportunity to stretch their bent joints, or to inhale the external air, from Monday morning to Saturday night; and a baby just two beginning at the trade. Mary 'WAS NOT QUITE TWO YEARS OLD' when she began! O ye who take delight in the spectacle of an infant school, who love to see the active arms and legs of babyhood flung out in all directions, and to hear the merry voices shouting in wild chaunts their pleasant lesson from the word of God, pause and realize this spectacle. All attempt at comment can but weaken its force.

But we have not done yet: we have, in the foregoing pages, exhibited a new-born babe under the prevailing plan of drugging. What proof can we adduce that so flagitious a custom exists in places where women work *at home?* Take the evidence of a coroner, Michael Browne, Esq., as given on March 1st, 1841.

"Has held the office of coroner of the county and town of Nottingham since May, 1836. During this period has held a considerable number of inquests on infants, who have died suddenly from the administration of opium in some form or other. Believes that in the majority of these cases the laudanum has been given in order to keep the infants quiet. The excuse has frequently been that the mother was obliged to adopt this plan because she had no time to attend to the child, being engaged in work. Has strong reason to believe that many infants, other than those on whom inquests are held, perish more insidiously from

the administration of laudanum. Has often remarked, on going to a house to hold an inquest on one infant who had died from laudanum, that other young children of the same parent had a peculiar vacant and listless expression, and a wan countenance, and emaciation of body, which convinced witness, from his experience of the effects caused by the system, that these children also had been accustomed to the use of laudanum, and on inquiry, this conviction has been confirmed by the parents. It has come to his knowledge, in consequence of inquiries made expressly to ascertain the fact, that a large quantity of Godfrey's cordial is prepared in this town. *One* druggist has assured him that he has made up himself, in *one* year, *thirteen hundred weight of treacle and dissolved opium.* Godfrey's cordial is almost entirely consumed by infants. Knows that the practice of administering pure laudanum to infants, as being more efficacious than the cordial, is very prevalent. *Knows that the cordial and laudanum are given to infants on the first day of their birth, and that it is prepared in readiness for the event.* Knows of an inquest lately, in which death took place from this cause, on the second or third day."

This gentleman's evidence, corroborated by that of medical practitioners and many others, extends to greater length than we have room for: and concludes in these words: "Within the last two years the number of these inquests has somewhat diminished, which witness is inclined to attribute *rather to a greater care*

in concealing such cases than to any diminution of mortality."

A chemist and druggist in the same town deposes that "the system has considerably increased since witness has been in the business, which he attributes to the abject poverty of the people; some female, lace-runners, do not get more than half-a-crown per week. Mothers say they have not time to nurse their children, as they must work so many hours to obtain this pittance of a living, *if it be a living.*" The same witness relates the following fact: "A case occurred a short time ago of a mother coming into the shop with her child in her arms. Witness remonstrated against giving it laudanum, and told the mother she had better go home and put the child in a bucket of water; it would have been the most humane plan of putting it out of the way. The mother replied that the infant had been used to the laudanum and must have it, and that it took a halfpenny worth a day, or SIXTY DROPS. . . . . Has known an infant killed with THREE drops of laudanum, but nothing was said about it."

One more subject, in itself a trifle indeed compared with the murderous crime above stated; but most important of all, as being the root of the system. This fact was stated on credible authority to Mr. Grainger. "An agent wished a runner to work a veil for five and ninepence, the sum paid by the manufacturer being, it was stated, six shillings. This veil and pattern were shown to another agent, who had exactly the same article and pattern to embroider from the

same warehouse. This second agent stated the price to be paid was eleven and sixpence, and that she would give the runner eleven shillings for working it. This happened some years since, and although the prices are much lowered, so that half a crown would be all that would be paid for the above article, yet witness believes the same frauds are committed. The manufacturers have availed themselves of the reduction of wages, thus fraudulently caused, gradually to lower the prices, till the runners can hardly live by them." This witness mentioned the case of a young woman who had to work so many hours, that a friend said she could not bear to see it, and took back to the warehouse a piece that had been given stating it was impossible for a young woman to live by her work. The answer from the manufacturer was, that he knew they could not live by the lace running, but that they must go on the town, as others had done! She further stated her opinion to be, that the great reduction of prices often leads to prostitution.

Ladies of England! under such circumstances as we have laid before you, are the materials of your daily attire prepared by manufacture and embroidery, the articles made up by dress-makers and milliners, and the very pins with which you secure them, formed to answer the purpose. At such a price you make your toilet — we have gone no further than that one branch of the almost numberless productions of British industry, and we will not wrong you by any appeal — if such FACTS do not speak, all language is utterly vain.

The untold horrors, any allusion to which would afford the pretext for an outcry against this book, as injurious to female delicacy, are all, every one, with all their causes and effects, fully open to the eye of Him, who said, in reference to the most beloved of all people, when they sinned to an extent not to be compared with England's sin, "Shall I not visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" and the extensive publication of what has so long been concealed from the general eye, is a token that He is about to vindicate His own holiness, justice, and mercy by some fearful act of vengeance against the transgressors. Let us therefore fear.

It has been asked, Why is this little book called "The Wrongs of Woman," seeing it is only to one class of female sufferers that its sad details apply? We answer, that the wrong against woman, against woman in every rank and every class, perpetrated by the means which have been very briefly sketched in these pages, is alike fearful and universal. Have we not a woman on the throne? and is she not wronged, the Queen of England, while rebellion is cradled, fostered, matured in the ancient nurseries of pure old English loyalty throughout the land? There ever has been, and ever will be, a spirit of restless discontent seeking to unsettle the minds of the lower orders; but so long as the humblest of England's wives and mothers had homes where the frugal meal that fair industry could secure to them might be eaten in peace; so long as those women were left to make such lowly homes pleasant to the labouring men, who, with "a

fair day's wages for a fair day's work," filled their proper station in the scale of society, and claimed the poor Englishman's share of that domestic comfort which is, or was, their country's dearest boast — so long a great but most effective opposing force was found in continual operation against the pernicious effects of political incendiarism; and however the man might bluster over imaginary wrongs in a crowd of noisy spouters, the quiet home, the clean-swept hearth, the industrious wife, and rosy prattling children that hailed his return, were better than fifty treatises on loyalty and contentment, to reconcile him to his lot. Besides, while God's laws were not outraged, nor His poor ground down by oppression that actually FORBIDS the woman of a Christian land to be "a keeper at home," to "rule the house," to adorn herself with "shamefacedness and sobriety," or to fulfil even the most sacred duties of a mother to her own baby offspring, yea, compels her to become an infanticide — so long the blessing was not withdrawn — the curse was not poured out upon the land. But now, through the atrocious system of which a very small, and that too the least revolting part, has been set forth, our women are changed into men, and our men into devils: and the fair inheritance of England's Queen is becoming but as a throne whose pillars rest on an awakening volcano.

Once bursting forth, in the fierce and fiery tumult of universal insurrection, who in that scene of turbulence and violence, of blood and desolation, will not in the wild plainings of those daughters of the land who

now dwell quiet and secure, averting their eyes from the sin and the sorrow, the consequences of which they never can avert from their devoted heads — who will not in that unpitied plaint, recognise a dreadful attestation that the cruelties now heaped upon the poorest of our sex, are in the broadest, most inclusive sense, THE WRONGS OF WOMAN?

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